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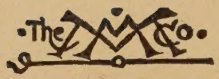

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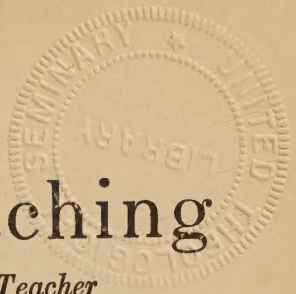

Creative Teaching

Letters to a Church School Teacher

BY

JOHN WALLACE SUTER, JR.

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To My Best Teacher

I Ascribe

All The Good Ideas In This Book

And All Its Errors

To My Best Teacher's

Most Grateful Pupil

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
MAY 22 1959

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PREFACE

This book sets forth in a non-technical manner certain principles of teaching. It is not a textbook, but is intended to be read by an individual rather than studied in a class. It is intended for people (whether young or old) who have never studied pedagogy or had any regular course of teacher-training, and is designed to prepare such persons to make their first studies in that field.

The principles here described apply to any age of pupil, and to pupil or teacher of either sex.

For convenience these letters assume that the reader teaches a class which meets on Sunday, but the suggestions made are equally applicable to weekday schools of religion.

The letters are intended to help teachers of religion in any Christian communion.

Even a casual reader will see that the book does not attempt to cover completely the subject of principles and methods of teaching. Its aim, on the contrary, is to arouse in the reader a thirst for knowledge.

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YOUR JOB

YOUR JOB

1

What is a Teacher?

I am impressed by a general failure to understand what a teacher of religion is. Many of the mistakes that teachers make are due to the fact that although they know a good deal about the Bible and personal religion, they do not know the answer to the simple question, What is a teacher? And this is really the first thing you ought to know.

2

A Leader

A teacher of religion is a leader. By placing in your hands a group of children, the Church commissions you to lead them through a series of typical religious experiences. You and they are members of the Church. But you are older, they younger; you more mature, they less. This means that you have had more experience than they; and it is by reason of this distinction that you are set among them as their leader. The typical experiences of the Christian religion are chiefly those of worship (public and private), and what we call social service or neighborliness, playing the part of a brother to our fellowmen. Your task, then, as a teacher of Christ's religion, is to take these particular children by the hand and lead them on the adven-

tures in worship and neighborliness which constitute the Christian life.

This emphasis on leadership in putting what is taught into practice is comparatively modern. A generation or two ago the task of a teacher of religion was not conceived in these terms. The teacher of that day was expected only to impart facts and ideas, only to instruct and exhort.

3

The Old Idea and the New

If you would understand in its fulness the contrast between the older method and the new, consider the old and the new way of constructing a system of lessons for Church-school work. Fifty years ago when any Church body created a committee to devise Sunday-school courses of study, the members of the committee came together bringing large sheets of paper on which were written the various items of Christian Truth to be imparted to the pupils. In their judgment their problem was to decide what portion of the total should be taught to a child at each stage of his development—the Life of Christ in one year, certain Old Testament characters in another, the Catechism in another, the history of the early Church in another, and so on. The entire deposit of Christian Truth had to be parcelled out and, as it were, fed to the children during their twelve school years.

In sharp contrast to the older method, such a committee today sets to work very differently. The first thing it does is to secure as true a description as possible of a typical child at each age from six to eighteen. What is a normal American six-year-old like? What

are his habits of thought, his mental and physical abilities, his spiritual faculties? What are his likes and dislikes? What are his characteristic temptations and joys and sorrows? How does he spend his days? What can he do best? In other words, What *is* he? These questions and others like them the committee asks concerning the seven-year-old, the eight-year-old, and so on up to eighteen. In other words, they draw twelve psychological portraits.

Having done this they next undertake to describe the normal *religion* of a typical child at each age. What does it mean, for instance, to be religious at the age of six? How does a six-year-old boy who is a conscious disciple of Christ differ from a six-year-old boy who is not aware of any personal relationship to Him? What does a six-year-old boy *do* to show his religion? What are his typical religious experiences? What does he give and what receive in a congregation where he engages in public worship, and in private when he says his prayers at night? What is God like to a six-year-old? What is conscience to him? What to him are neighborliness, sacrifice, service, loyalty? The same questions and others like them the committee asks in relation to the seven-year-old, the eight-year-old, and each year up to eighteen.

As you can well imagine, it requires a great deal of study and investigation to obtain reliable answers to these questions. The trained psychologist is called on for help, and even the physiologist, as well as the student of religion. Sometimes it takes a committee on courses of study as much as five or six years to secure a reliable and impartial description of wholesome, cheerful, intelligent religion at each of the twelve years from six to eighteen.

4

Your Bible

Let us assume that our committee on courses of study has done the preliminary work described in my last letter. What does it do next? It says, "We know how the ten-year-old child who is to enjoy religious good health should live. We know what we want him to experience. We know how we want him to express his loyalty to Christ. We have a definite notion of what he ought to be doing in his worship of God and in the service of his fellowmen. Let us now look in the Bible to see if somewhere between its covers we can find stories, parables, songs, letters, chapters of history, sermons, or other passages which if understood and enjoyed by this ten-year-old will have the tendency to make him want to be and do those things which constitute the Christian religious life at his age."

Whatever the committee succeeds in finding in the Bible which meets this test, it puts into its course of study for the ten-year-old child. But if it cannot find all that it needs there it must seek elsewhere. In other words, the Bible is used not so much for its own sake as because of its power to affect the lives of the children in question. We do not teach the parable of the Good Samaritan because it is in the Bible: we teach it because it is the best of all stories for strengthening the impulse to neighborliness and for preventing the formation of artificial barriers between class and class. The story has proven effective in changing lives. It tends to build up good habits of thought and action. That is why we use it. The committee finds that the Bible contains more material that is good (in this

sense of the word) than any other collection of religious writings in the world. It meets the test of experience. It works. But we do not confine our lesson-material to it altogether, for we find by applying the same test to other and later writings that God reveals Himself through them also.

5

Your Manual or Lesson Quarterly

Coming back now to our original statement, I think you may be able to see more clearly than before what I mean when I say that a teacher of religion must be a leader. Specialists have determined what, on the whole, your class of ten-year-old children ought to be doing this year in the way of religion. This conviction they have expressed in extended form in your Manual or Lesson Quarterly, which they place in your hands very much as a chart and compass are placed in the hands of a sea captain. "This is the way," they say, "in which ten-year-olds should go. Here are passages of sacred literature for study and conference which we think will tend to set them in motion in that direction. With the Holy Spirit as your chief Guide, and this material as an aid, take these children and lead them into a life where they may follow the example of their Saviour Christ and be made like unto Him."

6

Their Own Religion

You must lead your pupils to live their own religious life and not yours. You must let them have their own experience of God and not yours. Remember that there *is* such a thing as a ten-year-old religion.

There is also such a thing as a twelve-year-old and a thirteen-year-old religion, and so on all the way up and down the line. The religion of ten-year-olds will not be the same as yours. Of course it goes by the same name and has the same central ideas. Theirs is the Christian religion and so is yours. But their way of expressing it must be different from your way if both are to be genuine. Never try to lead them into a twenty-five-year-old religious experience. In other words, study *them* more than yourself, more even than the Bible.

O Almighty God, who hast inspired thy Church through the teaching of thy holy Apostles; Grant that standing fast in the unity of the faith we may all come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, both now and for evermore.

7

A Spiritual Parent

As the religious teacher of children you must aim to be their spiritual parent. This will mean that you will not dismiss them from your mind when the closing bell rings on Sunday. It means that you carry them on your mind and in your heart during the entire week and throughout the year. The attitude of every man toward his class in the Church school should have in it something paternal, and that of every woman something maternal. You must be greatly concerned for the spiritual welfare of your pupils. If one of them should encounter a major crisis, like a bereavement

or serious illness, be one of the first persons on the spot. Drop everything and go immediately to his home and stand by him in his trouble. More than anything which you may be able to do in the way of rendering tangible help, your presence there will be eloquent. The child will know that you are to him in spiritual matters something very like a parent.

The fact that a parental attitude is necessary when you are trying to lead children into the religious experiences appropriate to their age is one main reason why we do not place a girl of seventeen in charge of girls of, say, fifteen. A superintendent who made such an assignment would show that he failed to understand the true nature of the work of teaching religion.

Religion is not a topic, but a life. You teach it not by explaining it but by imparting it. In a sense it is almost wrong to speak of "teaching" religion at all. You do not so much teach it as *cause it to grow* in the lives of your pupils. If religion were simply a topic, like algebra or history, teaching it would be a merely mental process. On this assumption it might be proper to have a seventeen-year-old girl teach fifteen-year-olds, or even girls of sixteen. In fact she could manage a class her own age by keeping a week ahead of them in the knowledge contained in the textbook. She would only need to be bright, and keen to share her knowledge with others. But the whole situation changes when we realize that religion is not a topic but a life; for no one can maintain toward pupils only two years younger an attitude that could be called parental. Girls in their 'teens, no doubt, have a parental feeling toward kindergarten children, and it is these only whom they should assist in teaching.

O God, our heavenly Father, who hast blessed us with the joy and care of children; Give us light and strength so to train them, that they may love whatsoever things are true, and pure, and lovely, and of good report; following the example of their Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord.

8

A Friend

As a teacher of religion to your pupils you must be their friend. You may say at once that this idea is already contained in that of spiritual parenthood. It is in a way, yet friendship includes certain other elements. It is possible to be the parent of a child and not his friend. Not infrequently a man or woman fulfills most of the duties of parenthood without ever really meeting the child in comradeship through games and those other phases of life where friendship grows.

What, after all, is a friend? Perhaps there is no better definition than the one given by a school boy who said, "A friend is a person who knows all about you and still likes you."

You must know all about your pupils. This is essential because as their teacher of religion it is your business to set at work influences that will change their lives for the better, give them the power of God, and make Christ live in them. Inside knowledge is therefore one of the essentials to the right performance of your work. It is not an extra part. You must know all about them. But what, in detail, does this mean? What must you know?

You must know the games they play. Play is one

of the golden keys to the life and character of a child. It will not be enough to know the names of their favorite games, you must know how to play them. Have you ever played what they play? If not, you may perhaps be able to learn. But if the character of a game is such that you cannot play it, then be sure that you watch it played until you really understand it. For play, to a child, is not something frivolous or incidental. It is not a pastime. It is one of the most important things in his life. You never heard a six-year-old boy speak lightly of his railroad tracks and train of cars, or a fourteen-year-old speak carelessly of his football team. So you must know all about the games your children play. Are they playing games which they ought not to be playing? (Some are against the law.) If so, you certainly ought to know about it, for the games which they play are their very life. You must know about them so that your language and illustrations and ideas may be taken from that same world. You cannot influence them until you meet them, and you cannot meet them unless you move mentally on the plane where they are living.

9

Likes and Dislikes

You must know your pupils' likes and dislikes. This is another key. In a class of girls, one will like sewing and reading, another athletics and reading, another will dislike reading but enjoy nature-study and the theater, and so on. These things you must know. One of the indications of the excellence of the teaching in a class which I was visiting the other day was that the teacher, while telling a story, paused a moment in the

middle of it and catching the eye of one of the pupils, said, "You would like that, wouldn't you, Tom?" Tom smiled back without saying anything, and the story proceeded. The interruption took only a second. The point is that the teacher knew the likes and the dislikes of her pupils, and was on really friendly terms with them individually. I have heard that she influences strongly the lives of the children in her class.

10

Homes

You must know something about their family life. You will have to do something more than call at the home of each child once during the school year. You will not know all that you should about any pupil of yours until you can see in your mind's eye a picture of the interior of his home. You must have an idea of the temper of his family life; the personal standards of his parents; the books they read; the pictures on the wall; and the general character of the family interests and routine.

11

Friendliness

Probably you will not be able to visit the pupils in their homes as much as you would like. Here is one opportunity, however, to supplement this visiting, which you ought not to neglect.

Arrive at the place where your class meets at least ten or fifteen minutes before the opening hour. There will be plenty of things to attend to: writing something on the blackboard possibly, or putting up one or two pictures for the day, or other similar arrangements. If

you make this a regular practice you will find that some of your pupils will begin to come a little early, too. Naturally they will help you with your work, and thus a very fruitful companionship will grow up between you. At these times you will come to know individual pupils much better than you could if you met them only during the more formal class hour. You can find out many things about them which you would not care to talk over before the whole class. If the lesson hour comes after instead of before the Church service, you can probably make the same opportunity at the close instead of at the opening of the lesson period.

At all events miss no chance to talk with your pupils informally as a friend.

12

Day School and Reading

You must know what your pupils are doing in their day school. I know of a certain room in one parish house that contains a wall of book-shelves holding all the textbooks used in the public schools, grade by grade. Here are found the current textbooks on geography, history, literature, and other subjects which school children study. The Church-school teacher who has a class of eighth-grade children visits this room occasionally and looks over the eighth-grade books, and so with the other grades.

By consulting one or two of the day-school teachers and securing from them their annual lesson schedules it is a simple matter to find out what the pupils of your class in Church school are occupying their minds with during the week. If you will get hold of one or

two things that they have been learning recently you will find that in the lesson in religion for the day you can frequently make cross-references to the weekday lessons. It is a good thing for your pupils to realize that you are conversant with their day-school work. If you find out that during the past month your pupils, studying Greek history, have seen pictures of Corinth, it will be a simple matter for you to draw information from them on the subject of Corinth before you tell them about St. Paul's letter to the Christians of that city. The further you proceed in your work the more will these illustrations and cross-references abound.

The main reason for making these cross-references is not to make your teaching more interesting, but that the pupils may come to understand that God's creation is all of a piece, and that His truth is a unit. Strictly speaking there are no secular subjects and no secular schools. All knowledge is sacred. All truth is of God. The laws of mathematics and history and chemistry as they are learned in day school are simply descriptions of the way things happen; and they happen that way because God made them so. Your business as a Church-school teacher is not to teach a separate subject, but to help children interpret all subjects. Incidentally you will find that your pupils will become much more truly your friends if you can talk with them easily in terms of their day-school experiences as well as in terms of their prayer life and their play life.

I have mentioned a few of the outstanding things about your pupils which you ought to know, but I have not by any means exhausted the list. Many other things you will think of yourself. One can really say

that you ought to know everything about them. Before I leave this subject, however, let me remind you of certain specific things that you need to know about their physical and mental equipment. Is one of them weak in eyesight? Is one of them hard of hearing? Has one of them an unusually slow, though perfectly sound, mind? Is one of them undernourished? It is a great injustice to a child with a slight defect of which the teacher is not aware, to treat him as if he were either lazy or stupid.

13

Why Know So Many Things?

The reason for knowing so many things about your pupils is not, as commonly supposed, that you may supply yourself with a bagful of apt illustrations, or that you may be furnished with what pedagogical experts call "points of contact" to make your teaching bright and colorful and concrete. All these minor reasons are good enough as far as they go. But the more real and deeper reason for knowing these things is that they are the very stuff of which the pupil's every-day life is made, and it is precisely *that life* which a teacher of religion aims to influence.

It was undoubtedly in obedience to this principle that Jesus, the greatest Teacher, filled His sermons and discourses with homely references to field and garden, fishing-boat and kitchen. Perhaps you have been thinking of these as pretty figures of speech, or quaint old-world analogies. But they were nothing of the sort. There is nothing quaint to a fisherman about fish or to a shepherd about sheep. To a sower of seed there is nothing pretty or far away about sowing

or reaping or seed. Our Lord addressed His words to fishermen, artisans, and housekeepers, and got His teaching understood by references to their daily business. He did this because it was their daily life that He wanted to affect. He wanted to make the fishermen honest and brotherly fishermen; the farmers just and merciful farmers; and the housekeepers generous and thoughtful housekeepers. It may be a rather shocking thought, but I suppose a true one, that if Christ came in human form to us today He would talk to our industrial laborers about machine-shops and factories, and about vacuum-cleaners, automobiles, and newspapers to all of us.

"He spake of lilies, vines, and corn,
The sparrow and the raven,
And words so natural yet so wise
Were on men's hearts engraven.

"And yeast and bread and flax and cloth
And eggs and fish and candles—
See how the most familiar word
He most divinely handles!"[1]

"Christ was always in the thick of life. He dealt with beating hearts, active wills, current deeds, vital states. He kept to things in easy reach.

"To show God's care He points to flowers. To show God's grace He heals the blind. To teach humility He points to a blushing child. To show a miser's folly He talks of barns and feasts and laziness. To show fraternity He eats with publicans. . . . To intimate the fitness and potency of prayer He points to a hungry boy. To show how honor may shine in lowly deeds He washes His followers' feet.

[1] Quoted by G. A. Barton in his book *Jesus of Nazareth*. Macmillan.

"See His parables. Now they paint a king, now a sheep, now a vine, now a debtor, now a marriage feast, now an ox, now a band of angels, now a humble herdsman, now a house rock-fast, now a traveler in distress.

"He always keeps in touch with things in easy sight. And yet He is never shallow. Here is prime counsel for all who teach. Christ could be both vivid and profound—a twinship none too common in the teaching realm. . . . He was a supreme interpreter. He could make familiar, things that men thought strange. He could show that distant things stand near; that transcendent things lie within our range; that common things are precious; that humble things can be sublime; that each day's hues are heavenly; that every man is God-like." [1]

14

Liking

You remember the boy's definition of a friend as being a person who knows all about you and still likes you. I have been enlarging on the first part of it, that is, knowing all about your pupils.

The second half is equally important. Do you realize that it is part of your work to *like* every child in your class? This is not always easy. There will be the popular child, and the attractive one, and the one who happens to "hit it off" with you and appeal to your instinctive interest and affection. But there may be at least one in your class whom you find it difficult to like. You may think that if there is only one such out of eight or ten, you are doing pretty

[1] *Teacher-training with the Master Teacher,* by C. S. Beardslee. The S. S. Times Co.

well. Eighty or ninety per cent success is considered very good in most undertakings. It would be good in business. But in the matter of liking the pupils of your class anything short of one hundred per cent is tragic. For this is a spiritual and not a commercial enterprise. To try to be the leader and spiritual parent and friend of a child without learning to like him would create a very abnormal situation.

There are no rules for learning to like a person. You will have to resort to prayer and the grace of God and the *will* to like him. The only reason why I mention this at all is to warn you against a feeling of satisfaction if you find yourself liking all but one or two of your pupils. I realize that I am setting before you an ideal; but if I were not, what would be the use of writing to you at all?

> **O God, day by day lead me deeper into the mystery of life, and make me an interpreter of life to thy children; through Jesus Christ our Lord.**[1]

[1] H. S. Nash.

YOUR PREPARATION

YOUR PREPARATION

15

Tools

You have asked me how you ought to set about preparing a lesson. Let us suppose that next Sunday you will have to teach the lesson for the day to a class of eight boys.

Two hours is the minimum length of time which you ought to allow yourself for the preparation. As you get more and more interested in your pupils and in your subject undoubtedly you will often work longer than two hours. Let that be your minimum. It may be necessary occasionally to set aside two separate one-hour periods. This plan is not so good as doing two hours' work at one sitting, but it is sometimes more feasible.

It will probably help you to set aside a certain day each week, and the same hours on that day. Perhaps you will decide on Tuesdays from 7 to 9 o'clock in the evening, or possibly some morning regularly. The point is that if you settle upon a regular time it very soon becomes a part of your routine, and the other members of the household respect it and adjust themselves to it. Your friends and acquaintances will come to regard you as "hopeless" during those two hours on that particular day of each week. This is as it should be. Incidentally it increases their respect for the

work in which you are engaged, and perhaps for religion and the Church.

You must have a quiet place where the surroundings and atmosphere are conducive to concentration and study. You cannot properly prepare a lesson where other people are conversing, or where a radio or sewing-machine or victrola is active. Possibly your own room will prove to be the best place. On the other hand it may be necessary for you to seek the official silence of the public library. Many teachers prefer this even to the best possible room at home. There is an air of earnestness and purpose, and you are surrounded by all the reference-books, pictures, and maps that you can possibly use.

What books and materials should you take for the preparation of an approaching lesson? First of all, the Bible. I mean the whole Bible, containing both Testaments and not omitting the wonderful books of the Apocrypha. It makes no difference what course you happen to be teaching. It may be the life of our Lord, or Old Testament heroes, or Christian ethics, or Church history, or Missions. Whatever it is, you need the Bible at your elbow when you prepare a lesson. If you do not feel the need of the Bible there is something wrong with you; the trouble is not with the Bible.

In the second place, take your Prayer Book. No matter what subject you are teaching you will need this, and if you do not feel the need of it there is something wrong with you and not with the book. The reason why you need it I will explain more fully when I write of your opportunity and duty as a guide in the devotional life of your pupils.[1] All I need say

[1] Letters 49 and 50.

here is that the boys in your class go to Church and participate in public worship, that this is one of their main experiences in religion, that you are their leader in religious experience, and that therefore you will naturally find opportunities in your Sunday lessons for cross-reference to these experiences of public worship.

In the next place take your Hymnal. The same reasons for taking the Prayer Book apply to taking the Hymnal. Incidentally, much of the memory-work of your class will be found in both[1] these books as well as in the Bible.

Naturally you will take your teacher's Manual or Lesson Quarterly, for this is your special guide-book. It tells you with some detail what to do week by week and month by month. The time of lesson-preparation is precisely the time when you need this book.

You should have also whatever reference-book the Manual or Lesson Quarterly requires. Nowadays most Sunday-school guides prescribe at least one reference-book in the course of a year for parallel reading. Sometimes the reference will be to a single chapter, or perhaps a dozen pages, for a given lesson. These reference-books, together with all the other educational tools of your course, your parish provides for you at its own expense.

When a parish gives you a group of boys or girls to teach, it places upon you a very solemn responsibility and elevates you to the highest lay position in parish life. The service of teaching is the most sacred of the lay ministries. It is also an exceedingly difficult task, making heavy drains on ingenuity and spiritual

[1] In some cases the Services of Public Worship and the Hymns form two parts of a single book.

power. The parish which places this responsibility upon anyone, therefore, naturally gives him every aid and encouragement. The least that it can do is to place in the teacher's hands every possible help in the way of educational tools. These include a textbook, a quarterly or manual, the reference-books to which the manual refers, and whatever other paraphernalia is necessary in teaching the particular course and group in question. In providing these minimum things at its own expense the parish is not generous, it is merely just.

You should also take with you one complete outfit of the pupil's material. This will vary from grade to grade. It may include a small textbook, a question-and-answer notebook, and a set of pictures; perhaps more, perhaps less. Whatever it is, you should have one set by your side in the work of preparation. If there are eight boys in your class the parish must provide you with nine pupils' outfits, the ninth being for your personal use. This you take with you for your preparation because whatever work you assign to your boys next Sunday, whether reading or writing or anything else, you should first do yourself; and the time to do it is while you are preparing your lesson.

Never set your pupils any task which you have not already done yourself. There are several reasons for this. One is that it enables you to gauge the difficulty of the task. You may find on trial that what the Manual or Lesson Quarterly suggests for an assignment is too easy for your boys. You know these boys, and the editor of the Quarterly does not. If the assignment is too easy you must lengthen it. Or you may find that it is too hard, and then you will have to shorten it. Furthermore, you may discover a misprint in the pupils' material. This is not infrequent. It is

better for you to discover it first than leave it for the boys to find. You can then have them correct it when you make the assignment. But the most important reason for your doing the pupils' work is that it places you and them on a plane of mutual understanding and comradeship. They know that you know what it feels like to do the work.[1] They also know that they can examine your notebook as a model. They respect you for being able to do well what they themselves are trying to do well. It makes them feel that you are playing fair, and this attitude alone is worth all the trouble involved.

Finally, take your pen and a blank notebook. This notebook may be of the loose-leaf variety, or bound, and will probably be of standard size. The important thing is that it should suit you. Let it be the kind you like—any shape, any size, any color. But let it be a good one that will stand wear, and worthy of your best work.

You will see that this is quite an armful: Bible, Prayer Book, Hymnal, Manual or Lesson Quarterly, reference-book, pupil's equipment, notebook. Seven tools! But after all, the important question is not, How many tools? but, What does your task require of you?

16

Prayer

Having arrived at the quiet place where the atmosphere of study prevails, with two hours at your disposal, and having deposited these books and materials on a convenient and comfortable table, what do you do first?

Pray. You cannot begin this task of lesson-prepara-

[1] Letter 51.

tion without first seeking God's special help. That is, you cannot do so if you rightly interpret the nature of the work. People who undertake the preparation of a lesson without prayer are not irreligious or lacking in piety; what they lack is an understanding of the nature of the Church-school teacher's business.

Consider for a moment what is going to happen next Sunday. These boys will come into the Church school and sit in a group under your leadership. They will be there just forty minutes. Forty minutes once a week, and only for about thirty-five weeks out of the fifty-two! A little mental arithmetic will show you what a small fraction of their waking hours, in the course of a year, is spent in learning about their religion. Contrast this with the other influences that pour into their lives. The influence of their homes is continuous. It is daily. The opportunity of the public school extends perhaps over an even greater number of hours per day, but its influence, even so, may be less powerful than the home influence. Then there are the playground, the street, the movie, the magazine, the gang, and the other factors that constitute what the boys call "regular life."

Against this large array of agencies occupying practically the entire time of these boys, your chance lasts forty minutes every seven days, perhaps thirty-five times a year. How precious those moments become when seen in this perspective! They are more than precious—they are critical. In the course of a year you are allowed to make thirty-five impressions on these boys. As a Christian warrior, the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God is placed in your hands, and the Church bids you wield thirty-five strokes for the kingdom of God. Each time you meet your class

is a crisis. It is an experience for the boys which is so rare as to be almost unique. Everything depends upon how you acquit yourself, how you conduct the class. If you do nobly you will put into the lives of eight boys the impetus of thirty-five impulses toward loyalty to Christ. You will bring their souls into touch with a power which in the day of trial may just save them from calamity.

On the other hand, if you manage the class badly through lack of preparation, if you stumble aimlessly through the forty minutes, if your work lacks purpose and intelligence and you lack poise, if you are nervous or distracted, or even only lazy and vague, you will not only lose your opportunity, but, worse still, you may do positive harm. I mean that by your carelessness and poor workmankship you will say to them, in deeds which speak louder than words, that the whole enterprise known as the Christian religion is of so little account that it does not win the enthusiasm and kindle the best efforts of an adult who teaches it.

Remember that the boy makes the comparison between his day-school teacher and his Sunday-school teacher. In the day school he finds himself in an institution where everything is well planned and minutely prepared. The teacher is held responsible to someone higher in authority who in turn is responsible to someone else. She knows her business. Her work commands respect. Her purposefulness and consecration and efficiency confer prestige upon her. The boy feels all this and responds to it. He respects the subjects taught by her because he sees that grown-ups prove by their works that they consider them important. He says, "Mathematics and literature and geography are such important subjects that my grown

people get me up a first-class school in which to learn them, a school that means business, where good work is rewarded and bad work penalized." Imagine then what happens when the same boy, having gone to Sunday school, adds, "But religion is so unimportant in the eyes of grown people that they do not bother to get me up a real school in which to learn it. They only give me a makeshift. Nothing seems to matter there. It is a joke."

In other words, by observing the contrast between the attitude of the men and women of the Church toward education in reading, writing, and arithmetic and their attitude toward religious education, the boy draws the inference that Christ's religion must be a matter of little consequence.

It is a great mistake to suppose that a Sunday school is sure to do good just because it is a Sunday school. It is the easiest thing in the world for such a school to do harm. Carrying on a Sunday school at all is a very dangerous thing for a parish to do. It is a necessary thing to try, and done right it is very glorious. Like most glorious things, however, it is dangerous. It is dangerous because it is sure to wield a strong influence either for good or bad, just as physical force is bound to be either constructive or destructive. Looking at the same problem more narrowly as it applies to the teacher instead of the school, you will see that neither does a teacher of religion necessarily do good. He does either good or harm, according to the way he behaves. Your boys, for instance, are coming to you next Sunday. You cannot "turn off" your influence on a given Sunday because you do not feel up to your task, for whenever people meet together the forces of influence are brought into play

even if no words are spoken. Influence them you must next Sunday, whether you wish to or not. The only question is whether you will influence them in the direction of Christ-likeness or in some other direction.

Therefore you must make sure that you are fit. You cannot do this work without God's help. Ask Him to help you to lift these boys nearer to Him, so that they may receive His power and the touch of His spirit. Do not pray for childhood in general, but think of each one of these boys personally and individually; call each one by name, and beseech God to give you the strength and skill to help each one in the way that he most needs help. When you have done this you will be ready to go on with the work of preparing the approaching lesson.

Teach us, O gracious Lord, to begin our works with fear, to continue them in love, and to finish them with hope; looking with cheerful confidence unto thee, whose promises are faithful, and whose mercies endure for evermore; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

17

Reading

First, open your Teacher's Manual or Lesson Quarterly and read the chapter that explains the coming lesson; read it through from beginning to end without pausing to make notes or to draw up plans in your mind. Read not only your textbook, but also whatever references it tells you to consult. This will probably include a passage or two from the Bible and a dozen pages from the required reference-book. You may have to read this matter twice. One reading suffices for some people, and others need two. This does not

mean that the second type of person is less bright than the first but simply that there are two distinct types of mind, equally useful, of which one retains the substance of a chapter after a single reading while the other requires two. Find out which type of mind you have, and act accordingly.

While you are doing this reading keep yourself in a receptive frame of mind; let the story, or character-sketch, or poem, or chapter of history sink into your understanding. If it is familiar, possibly repetition has dulled the edge of its interest and you have become callous to its beauty and force. Then use your imagination and pretend that you have never heard it before. Let its true unconventionality surprise you; let its vigor stir and refresh you; let its mystery awaken in you burning thoughts and searching questions. Remember that when this story first burst upon the world it was startingly informal, vigorous, and fresh.

A few years ago a Japanese at the age of twenty came for the first time in contact with the four Gospels. He read the account through, then turned back to the first page and read it through again, and then once more, before he put it down. He was thrilled and shocked and amazed to learn that such words could have been spoken and such deeds done. Try to feel the way this man felt when you read over the lesson-material for next Sunday.

O God, whose only Son opened unto his disciples the Scriptures, making their hearts to burn within them; Inflame our hearts, we beseech thee, with such devotion to thee, that we may know thee as thou art; through the same, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

18

Your Aim

The next thing to do is to choose a definite aim for the meeting of your class next Sunday. That is, you must decide precisely what you wish to accomplish in the experience of those particular pupils on that particular day. What do you want that forty-minute period to mean in their lives? What are you going to make it your aim to do for them?

In the technical parlance of education the word "aim" means, What you propose to do to your pupils. Here are some aims that have been used by teachers on various Sundays: To make these boys more generous. To make them more loyal to Christ. To make them worship with more intelligence. To awaken in them more moral courage.

Now you see what I mean by saying that your next step is to choose a specific aim for the lesson that you are preparing. If you will look in your Manual or Lesson Quarterly at the beginning of the chapter or lesson for the day you will probably find that an "Aim" has been suggested by the editor. By a singular coincidence his aim may happen to be identical with your chosen purpose for these pupils next Sunday. In that case you will adopt it as your own. This, however, will not usually happen, nor is this fact any reflection upon the editor or author of the book. It simply means that he does not know personally Henry and John and Tom and Richard, the boys in your class. You do know these boys. It is your special business to know them well. You know what they need, what their special weaknesses are, what their enthusiasms are, and their

interests, and their spiritual gifts. Setting this knowledge and the lesson material side by side, the final responsibility rests upon you to decide what the "aim" (in the technical sense) shall be of your next Sunday's work. It may take you fifteen minutes or more to think this out and select the best possible aim. Fifteen minutes thus spent is well spent. When you have made your decision, write it in your notebook at the top of the page reserved for that particular lesson.

19

Aims

I have said that in the field of education the word "aim" has a special or technical meaning. It refers to the formative influence that you are trying to exert on your pupils, the changes that you are trying to bring about in their characters or attitudes or feelings. Whatever it is that you desire to do to them is, technically speaking, your aim. Every lesson is supposed to have an aim in this sense of the word.

Similarly, you will have an aim for your year's work which will be more inclusive than the aim for a lesson. Carrying this scheme higher you will see that there is a general aim for the entire Church school; one for religious education as a whole; and indeed one for education as a whole.

Returning to the foot of the ladder, I think you will understand what is meant when educators say that by its aim every lesson you teach must contribute toward the total aim of your year's course, and that the year's course must have an aim that will contribute toward the total aim of the school, which in turn must contribute toward the accepted aim of all religious educa-

tion. In some public-school systems this "theory of aims" is so carefully worked out that a supervisor who visits your class makes a record of what you are doing in order to meet you afterward and challenge you to defend your practice in terms of the aim which you had chosen for that lesson, challenging you further to defend *that* aim in terms of the year's aim, and so on.

This whole idea of educational aims, though it can be carried too far and made too mechanical, embodies a very sound principle. It keeps before our minds the fact that it is the children that we are supposed to teach and help. (This warning is popularly expressed in the epigram, "You are here not to teach a book but to teach children.") Never lose sight of the fact that the main business of the teacher of religion is to influence lives.

Another reason why the emphasis on aims is good for you is that it guards you against the sin of aimlessness. More teaching is hurt by aimlessness than by almost any other defect. Class after class that I have visited was suffering from this malady. I have been in classrooms where the teacher had a pleasing personality, plenty of intelligence, a good book, and an interesting subject, but where all of these advantages went for nought because the teacher was not aiming at anything particular, and the class drifted like a ship without a rudder.

20

Writing

When you have done the necessary reading and preliminary thinking and have selected your "aim," open your notebook to a blank page and write out your lesson-outline or teaching plan. This written outline

is the crucial and final step in your lesson-preparation. By an outline I mean a skeleton program indicating just how you expect your class to spend its forty-minute period next Sunday under your guidance. It is a forty-minute time-table of the activities of the group of which you are the leader. It resembles the order of business of a meeting of a club or committee. It should include everything that is to take place in your classroom—not only the mental work, but the other features also.

I am sorry to say that some teachers, with unconscious humor, entertain the idea that they are supposed to conduct the lesson as laid down in the textbook or Lesson Quarterly. Nothing could be further from the intention of its author. What is labeled "Lesson 12" in your Manual may be compared to a mine. Into it you are supposed to delve. You are expected to discard what you cannot use to the benefit of your particular pupils, and to keep only what to them will be "gold," hammering it into a form suited to their needs. You will also put in, as all goldsmiths do, other material not contained in the original ore. It is the alloy added to pure gold that makes it strong enough and pliable enough for use. The alloy in your case may be some anecdote or illustrations drawn from your own experience or from your reading; some reference to an event in the life of your parish or your town; a reference to an approaching holiday; or other matter of this kind which no editor of a textbook could possibly provide.

For your job next Sunday is intensely local, concrete, and specific. It concerns a certain handful of boys inhabiting one little spot on the map, and it falls on a particular date in a particular year. But the men who

compiled your book had to consider not specific pupils, but the generality of children; not one town but the United States; moreover, they wanted the book to last at least a decade, and therefore could not fix their attention too concretely on any given year of grace. I am sure that you begin to see now that what will give your lesson color and a tingling sense of reality are the things that you will personally add.

If you get the measles and send for a doctor, what you want of him is not a book on "The Treatment and Cure of Measles," but a prescription. Of course you want him to know everything about the treatment and cure of measles, but you pay him to reduce this knowledge to the one prescription that fits your case. When you wish to go to Washington you visit the railroad Information Bureau and expect to receive a time-table, not a treatise on "American Trains and Their Habits." Yet you want the railroad official to know those other thousands of facts which for the moment you care nothing about. Otherwise you would not care to depend upon him for the particular facts that bear on your proposed journey.

The difference between the printed Manual or Lesson Quarterly and a teacher's original outline for her own particular pupils is a good deal the same. Your Manual is like the book on the treatment of measles, or the treatise on American trains. Your outline corresponds to the prescription or the time-table. It concerns itself with a particular group of boys and with the special contingency which will take place in your classroom next Sunday.

These are a few of the many good reasons why you must make out your own written lesson-outline. Do not write every word that you will speak. It is an

outline. The lesson is not a lecture, but an event. Construct it, therefore. Build it up step by step. Create it. Give it the stamp of your own personality. Hundreds of Church schools are using the same textbook that you are using. We may assume that next Sunday a thousand different teachers will teach that same "Lesson 12" to a thousand classes. If this be the case, these thousand teachers ought literally to follow a thousand *different* lesson-outlines. Much of the material will be identical, but the lessons will still be different, for each will have its own creator in the person of a certain man or woman who is the teacher. What you "teach from" will therefore be your outline in your notebook. It will not matter very much if you leave your textbook at home. What you *must* take is your notebook containing your original outline. This you will have open before you on the table, and from it you will conduct the meeting of your class.

21

What an Outline Is

You have asked me to tell you "concretely" what a lesson-plan or teaching outline ought to contain. Let me name some of the usual items.

In the first place there is the important matter of the opening prayer for the meeting of the class. After the statement of your aim this should usually be the next thing which appears on the page of your notebook. Every class session should open with a short prayer. This takes about thirty seconds or perhaps a minute. It corresponds in a way to grace before meals. The object of it is to ask God's blessing on the work in hand. In this act you and your pupils conse-

crate yourselves for the forty-minute period which is just beginning. It is a dedication of yourself to the undertaking in which you are jointly to engage. Even if the entire school has just come from a service of public worship in the church, the opening prayer for the individual class is necessary. The Sunday morning Church-school service is a large public affair, comparatively general in its nature. The opening prayer of your class is a small, comparatively private affair, specific in its nature.

We are still imagining that this is, say, a Tuesday evening, and that you are preparing your next lesson. This is the time when you must decide upon the opening prayer for the class next Sunday. Who is going to say the prayer? There are several possibilities. Perhaps you will say it alone; perhaps the pupils and you will say it together in unison; perhaps one of the pupils will say it alone. These are all good ways. The point is that you must choose now the method for next Sunday. If you are going to say it alone, now is the time to select it. If it is to be said in unison, it must either be a prayer which the class knows by heart (possibly a class prayer), or one which they can read. Perhaps you will have to write or typewrite copies. If so, this is the time to do it. If a pupil is going to say it alone, that constitutes an individual assignment of work of which he must be informed in advance. The opening prayer may be taken from a prayer book, or it may be an original prayer. There are many possibilities. The whole field is open to you. Whatever you decide to do, write your decision in your notebook. This will be the first main heading in your outline, the first step in your program. A

typical example of an actual entry in a teacher's notebook would be:

I. PRAYER

> **Grant to us, Lord, we beseech thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as are right; that we, who cannot do anything that is good without thee, may by thee be enabled to live according to thy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord.**
>
> Said by heart, by Henry Jackson.

As you see, while the preparation of your first step has taken a good deal of thought on your part, it has resulted in a brief entry of only a few lines in your notebook.

The second heading in your outline will perhaps be, "Review Last Week's Work." On the other hand it might be assigning the work for the week to come, or an oral recitation of memory-work. There must be no set formula for the sequence of steps in a lesson period. A lesson-outline contains many items. Review, Recitation, New Assignment, Class Business (attendance, etc.), Writing, Story-Telling, Map Work, Distribution of Pictures, Discussion of Plans for the Coming Week, The Asking of Prepared Questions, Voting on some Definite Plan. Others occur from time to time.

You must see that these items do not come in the same order every week. There should be variety from Sunday to Sunday. This is where your ingenuity and creative power come into play. Teaching is an art, and every teacher an artist. You must mould and shape and color your work in such a way as to make it most appealing and effective. The people and cir-

cumstances which surround you in your classroom, and the literary and other materials at your disposal, constitute the medium through which you exercise your creative talent. You are a spiritual and religious artist, and with God's help you are creating character. There is a hint for you in the fact that the word "poet" comes from a Greek root which means "to create." The fact that there is some poetry in your nature is one of the signs that your minister did not make a mistake when he appointed you for the work of teaching.

22

How Outlines Vary

As I was saying, your outlines week after week should not follow the same sequence. If they did your teaching would be monotonous. It would be a great mistake to have a mould into which to pour the different lessons. Unfortunately, some teachers do this. They always begin with the review, then give the assignment for next week's work, then tell the story, then mark the attendance, etc. The pupils become so used to this order that the classroom period soon grows dull and lacks life. You must vary your sequence. Remember that an element of surprise helps to arouse fresh interest and hold attention.

You must also study the question of variety within a given outline. I mean variety of occupation on the part of the pupils. When you prepare your teaching-plan always do so from the point of view of the children in your class. Keep asking yourself how it is going to feel *to them* to go through the experiences that you plan to have them go through. Then you will see that variety is very important. For instance,

part of their time will be spent sitting and listening; part will be spent standing and reciting; part in writing; part in discussing; in performing class business and errands; in answering questions; in writing on the blackboard. You will notice that some of these experiences are comparatively active and others comparatively passive, from the pupil's point of view. It is a great mistake to lump all the active elements together, placing them next to each other in sequence, and then follow them with all the passive elements. This is an extraordinarily common error. It results in fatigue. Be sure, therefore, when you make out your teaching plan, that the pupils are constantly alternating between one type of event and another. If they have been sitting and listening for some time, get them to stand or walk or write or speak for a while before they have to sit and listen again.

Even if you have prepared the best possible lesson-outline you may still encounter a situation in the classroom which will throw you off the track. This is sure to happen sometimes. Don't let it discourage you. There is such a thing as a legitimate reason for being thrown off the track. Perhaps a pupil will bring up some genuinely important question which presses for an answer at the moment. It may be your golden opportunity. Remember that the ultimate purpose of teaching religion is to influence lives. The "aim" of your lesson may be furthered by this digression from your formal teaching plan. You must be the judge of this. There are three points to remember in this connection:

First, you must be the master of the situation. If you decide to lead your class down a by-path, well and good, but you must keep the lead and it must be you

who decides when you have gone far enough and it is time to turn back.

Secondly, be sure that before the lesson-period is over you take the class back to the main trend of the day's work, gathering up the side issues into the chief topic, so that the work may be unified.

Thirdly, remember that it is very important to *have* a track from which to be thrown off! There is all the difference in the world between this condition of affairs and aimless wandering in a trackless waste.

Deepen and quicken in us, O God, the sense of thy presence. Make us to know and feel that thou art more ready to teach than we to learn. Grant us dignity in our own eyes by taking us into thy service, and by revealing thyself to us as our Counsellor, our Father, and our Friend; through Jesus Christ our Lord.[1]

[1] H. S. Nash.

YOUR LESSONS

YOUR LESSONS

23

What is a Lesson?

After all, what is a lesson? To this question there are five possible answers.

A lesson is a moral. This is the first and least adequate answer. We speak of telling a story and then adding a moral, or lesson. One often hears a teacher say, "Now children, what lesson do we learn from this beautiful story?" It is permissible to use the word in this sense, though it is the most restricted and least helpful meaning.

A lesson is a story told for a moral purpose. This is the second answer and marks a progress beyond the first. "Our lesson today is the story of the Prodigal Son." In this sense the word is used to describe the official "Lessons" read in church. We speak of the First Lesson and the Second Lesson, meaning the first and second reading from Holy Scripture. This definition, however, is also inadequate.

A lesson is an outline or teaching plan showing how a forty-minute classroom period is to be spent. This is the third answer. Such an outline will cover all the events planned as a program for that one meeting of the class, and in it the story has its place as one of many items. It is a fairly good definition, but not the best.

The inadequacy of the third answer will be appar-

ent to you if you consider for a moment this question: "What is a symphony?" When a symphony is about to be played there is on the leader's desk a thick book known as the score. On the pages of this book are written the notes to be played by the various musicians in the orchestra. If you took that book up, you might point to it and say: "Here is the symphony; I hold it in my hand." But of course this would not be true. The book is not the symphony. It is a series of musical directions which must be strictly obeyed by the different players of an orchestra if a symphony is to be the outcome. The symphony itself is a complex series of sounds issuing from perhaps a hundred instruments. These sounds roll forth both simultaneously and in sequence. It may take twenty minutes for the symphony to be produced. A symphony is the edifice, the notes are the plans.

Your teaching plan or outline bears very much the same relation to the lesson itself that the printed score bears to the symphony. If your teaching plan (which is a set of directions) is resourcefully followed, the lesson will come to life. A lesson happens. It is not something on paper. It is a bit of group life which lasts forty minutes and takes place in a classroom. It is made up of conversation, and monologue, and chorus recitation, and praying, and silent thought, and writing, and reading, and sometimes singing, drawing, clay-modelling, and other activities. The distinguishing feature of this series of happenings which makes it a lesson is its purpose; the fact that you have planned it and will direct it, and that a central theme or topic gives it a beginning, middle, and end, making it a unit.

These considerations lead naturally to the fourth answer to our original question, which is, A lesson consists of the classroom experiences of the group in going through the program which you have planned for them. This is the best answer so far, and is almost adequate. It has at least the great advantage of making clear that a true lesson is not something that can be bought over a counter in a bookstore. It is a living something into which living people put a bit of their own lives. You do not hand over a lesson; you conduct it.

The fifth and final answer, which is the really adequate one, will contribute two new ideas. It recognizes (1) the fact that a lesson really begins in the several homes of the pupils and teacher. (The very youngest children, of course, have no home work; but aside from them it is true that each lesson begins at home when the pupils and teacher sit down to make their preparation for the coming meeting of the class.) It also recognizes (2) that the lesson culminates somewhere outside the classroom, in some course of action wherein the pupils, by special arrangement with the teacher, put the lesson into practice.

Suppose that you engage a woman to teach your daughter to play the piano. When the child goes to the studio for her first lesson the teacher gives her a book and says, "Here is a textbook that tells how to play the piano. It was written by the greatest player of the piano who ever lived. It is divided into chapters, and each chapter explains the principles of how to play a certain piece. Now open the book at the beginning of the first chapter. This lesson explains how to play a simple little thing by Mozart. You will notice that it is divided into para-

graphs. Each paragraph shows how a certain number of bars are to be played. Now read the first paragraph to me aloud. Now close the book and tell me in your own words what it says. Notice that it explains how you are to use each hand, and how to use the pedals. It also tells you what expression to put into each phrase."

Suppose this teacher goes through the entire book in this fashion, fixing in your daughter's mind all the rules and regulations and ideals in regard to playing each piece. Let us say that there are twenty chapters in the book, and that the methods of playing twenty musical compositions are explained. After twenty weeks the teacher presents you a bill for having taught your child to play the piano. But before paying the bill you remark, "I think I would like to hear my daughter play something, to see how she has progressed." "Oh," says the teacher, "I haven't had her touch the piano, I have only taught her how it ought to be played. She knows perfectly how to play twenty beautiful compositions. Just ask her and she will tell you." That is all very well, but you would scarcely be satisfied with it. You expected your child to become able to play the piano, not merely to recite how it is done. There is a difference between learning *how to play* and learning *to play.*

In our Church schools we have been behaving very much like the imaginary piano-teacher. We have opened the door and have said to the world, "Send your children here and we will teach them to live the Christian life." Many children have come in. But what have we done for them? We have given them a book divided into chapters and paragraphs, writ-

ten, as it were, by the greatest Exponent of the Christian life. This book we have had them learn page by page and verse by verse, but for the most part we have never let them "put their fingers on the piano."

The psychologists tell us that the only way to learn to do a thing is to practise doing that thing. They do not say that this is the best way, but that it is the only way. The only way to learn to play the piano is to practise playing the piano. The only way to learn to skate is to put skates on your shoes and get out on the ice. The memorization of a book on skating would not enable you to perform like an expert skater. This psychological principle applies to all human activities without exception. We can therefore safely say that the only way to learn to live the Christian life is to practise living the Christian life.

We must examine the implications of this word "practise" closely as applied to our present problem—religious education. The business of a Church-school teacher is to get his pupils to practise the typical acts which constitute Christian living. He must get them to put themselves though its paces; to drill themselves.

If you are to teach your pupils to be kind to those in trouble you must not only explain to them what this means, and exhort them, but also (and *especially*) they must consent to definite exercise or practice in being kind to somebody now. For instance, take them with you some afternoon to a hospital, or to a boy or girl who has met with an accident, or to some other child in need. Let them take a book or a game, or perhaps flowers, which they have paid for out of their class treasury, representing their own

savings and earnings. Let the class vote on all these matters: What day they will go; where they will meet; whom they will visit; what gift they will take; how much money they will spend. When finally they go on this errand (and perhaps you go along with them), then, and not before, that particular lesson reaches its culmination.

Perhaps you are now ready for the fifth and final answer to our question, "What is a lesson?" Here it is. A lesson is a planned group-experience, engaged in by pupils and teacher, beginning in their several homes, receiving direction and inspiration in the classroom, and culminating in some special act of worship or service in the home or in the community.

To sum up this matter, the five possible answers to our question, "What is a lesson?" are as follows:

1. A lesson is a moral.
2. A lesson is a story told for a moral purpose.
3. A lesson is an outline or teaching plan showing how a classroom period is to be spent.
4. A lesson is a planned group-experience taking place in a classroom.
5. A lesson is a planned group-experience, engaged in by pupils and teacher, beginning in their several homes, receiving direction and inspiration in the classroom, and culminating in some special act of worship or service in the home or in the community.

As a matter of fact, an epitome of the history of religious education in this country during the past fifty years is briefly sketched in these five definitions, for religious educational practice has advanced step by step along the lines which these definitions indicate. You can probably recall the Sunday school

that you attended as a child and assign its place in this list.

> O Blessed Jesus, who didst bid all those who carry heavy burdens to come unto thee; Refresh us with thy presence and thy power. Quiet our understandings and give ease to our hearts by bringing us close to things infinite and eternal. Open to us the mind of God, that in his light we may see light. And crown thy choice of us to be thy teachers by making us springs of strength and joy for those whom thou hast sent us to serve.[1]

24

Habit

People have been called "bundles of habit." We are imitators of our past selves. Your business as a teacher is to start or confirm in your pupils the assortment of habits that will be most useful to them throughout their lives. Education is for behavior, and behavior consists largely of habits. The psychologists tell us that as early as possible we ought to make automatic and habitual as many useful actions as we can.

A good resolve gives a new "set" to the brain at the moment when it produces the appropriate action in the person that makes the resolve. Consequently as a teacher of behavior or life your rôle must be not to preach, or to abound in abstract talk (however good), but rather to lie in wait for practical opportunities to induce your pupils to make "strokes of behavior" that will strengthen their character.

"To teach a lesson well is to use or change the

[1] H. S. Nash.

pupils' present ideas in such a way as to promote a particular change in their attitude or conduct."

25

Thoughts and Deeds

It is perfectly true that religion consists of a great deal besides acts. I am not forgetting the other elements. But in an exposition one can emphasize only one thing at a time, and in the past few pages I have been deliberately emphasizing *guided living* as a chief part of religious education.

Our Lord said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." The heart is important, and later I shall speak of your leadership in the devotional life. The mind is also important, and we shall see what this involves in the way of memorization, the use of the judgment, and other intellectual activities. The main emphases, however, in the two Great Commandments are the worship of God and the service of fellowmen. Both of these are *activities.* It is true that they spring from certain attitudes of mind and from a certain fervor of heart, and that it is therefore necessary to cultivate those attitudes and that fervor. But these by themselves are not sufficient. There must also be, as I have said, the practice of the two activities—towards God (worship) and towards man (service).

26

Story-Telling

You will do well to read one or more books on the art of story-telling. These will give you certain well-

known rules and principles and other hints. There are one or two points to which you must give particular attention.

You must realize the great importance of the story as a means of teaching. Keep an eye on yourself and see that you do not fall into the bad habit of neglecting the story. Do not let a meeting of your class go by without using at least one.

The best kind of story to use is the kind that contains its own moral, that is to say, one in which the spiritual teaching is evident enough so that you will not feel the need of labelling it and adding it as a tag. The best possible sermon is a good story. As you grow in teaching-ability you should use stories more and more.

Practise telling stories to your friends and to the members of your family. Remember that the only way to learn to do a thing is to practise doing that thing. This applies to story-telling as truly as to everything else.

Be sure to use only the best stories. The literature available is very rich in these. Do not pass them over and content yourself with unworthy material. Some of the greatest, most colorful, and most thrilling stories are found in the Bible, and some in other books.

Remember to use direct discourse in telling a story. Give the exact words actually spoken by the different characters in their conversation. If you fall into the habit of substituting indirect for direct discourse you will rob the narrative of much of its vividness. If you do not believe this, open your Bible at Genesis 37:29-33. First read this passage as it is written, and then read it as I give it here, in *indirect* discourse, and see how flat it has become.

> And Reuben returned unto the pit; and the child Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren and said that the child was not; and that as for him, whither should he go? And they took Joseph's coat and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father; and said that they had found it, and that he could tell whether it was his son's coat or no. And he knew it, and said that it was his son's coat; and that an evil beast had devoured him; and that Joseph was without doubt rent in pieces.

27

Mental Images

If you close your eyes you can see in your imagination the front door of your house, or the streets of a distant city, or the face of some absent friend. By an effort of the imagination you can also "hear" the sound of sleigh bells, or of a brass band playing "Onward, Christian Soldiers." Probably you can also "smell" the fragrance of violets, or the peculiar damp odor of a steaming plum-pudding. You can also "taste" orange juice, and "feel" the touch of running water on your hand. Besides the images connected with the five senses, you can also feel familiar motions, such as running or swimming or throwing a ball. All such imaginary or mental experiences are called mental images.

In telling stories to children, and also in describing

things to them, use as many *types* of mental image as you can. Do not always tell how things look, but take care also to put in the sounds. Some of the most dramatic and vivid passages in stories are due to the recalling of sounds. Remind them how certain things feel, and have them pause for a moment to remember. For instance, if the scene you are describing is laid in Alaska, make your talk vivid by having the pupils recall how their hands felt in winter when they were numb with cold. The same device can be used with all the senses. A mistake made by many teachers is to use mental images in connection with only one sense, selecting, of course, the one in which the teacher herself happens to experience the most vivid mental images. Remember that among your pupils there may be several whose mental images are most vivid where yours are weakest. In fairness to these pupils you must guard against specializing on a certain sense just because it is easiest for you.

28

Memory Work

"Memory Work" means the memorization of certain portions of religious literature calculated to enrich one's spiritual life. Especially in the Bible, Prayer Book, and Church Hymnal, but in other religious writings as well, there are many passages of beauty and power with which a pupil can store his mind. In doing so your object is not only to give him culture, acquainting him with great literature, though this is a worthy aim, but also to strengthen his moral and religious life by arming him with weapons as a defense against spiritual enemies.

There are times when a memorized precept or rule of life may leap to the front as a ready guide for immediate action. Our moral life consists very largely in making decisions. We are often helped to make the right one by the almost automatic recall of some long-memorized rule of life, some guide to action, or concise expression of an ideal. The Golden Rule is an example. It has often been pointed out that the Bible record of our Lord's spiritual battle in the wilderness shows that as each separate temptation came to Him there flashed into His mind a passage from Scripture indicating how it should be met.

The theory of education in religion has been undergoing the same general change as the theory of education in other fields. That is to say, we are learning to look upon religious education as a *training* of definite religious *abilities*. We have begun to expect tangible results; we are saying that a real religious education is one that actually makes a boy or girl live a definite life of worship and service. In other words, we want modern religious education to be practical rather than merely verbal; it should be an aid to and bear fruit in acts rather than words.

This modern tendency to emphasize practice over mere knowledge is necessary and valuable. The practical side of education was indeed woefully neglected until recently, and we do well to give it new emphasis. But our emphasis upon it must not lead us to fall into the opposite error of regarding practice as the whole of education. "Mere knowledge," as it is sometimes derisively called, is still of immense value. Our children must be as thoroughly informed today as ever. Truth must be diligently sought and revered.

To learn by heart means to learn letter-perfect. It is only a little more difficult to learn a passage letter-perfect than to learn it approximately. The difference between these two performances is very slight from the point of view of a pupil's effort. Nevertheless, it is very great from the point of view of his moral and spiritual growth. To allow approximation in place of perfection is to encourage just that intellectual laziness and carelessness of detail which, starting in lesser things, easily leads to lack of integrity all along the line, culminating perhaps in some serious form of dishonesty or in general untruthfulness. It also encourages lack of thoroughness in observation, and may lead to other slovenly and debilitating mental habits.

Teach your pupils the meaning of a passage before you ask them to memorize it. It is a waste of effort to memorize the mere verbal sound of a passage without knowing what it means. Incidentally, it takes longer. If you have ever attempted to memorize a paragraph of nonsense you will recall how much more difficult it was than memorizing an intelligible paragraph of equal length. If a child undertakes to learn by heart a paragraph of which he does not understand the meaning, he is forcing himself to labor under this very difficulty.

Suppose it is the Twenty-third Psalm. Go over it with the pupil and give him its general atmosphere and point, perhaps showing him pictures or models and giving him an understanding of the figures which appear in the Psalm. Study the more difficult words with him, making sure that he has a definite and true conception of their meaning. Talk with him about the Psalm as a whole, drawing comparisons with

things which he already knows in his daily life. When finally the meaning of the Psalm is familiar and vivid to him, and he feels at home in its atmosphere, then, *and only then,* set him the task of learning it by heart. Now the child in going over the Psalm word by word and phrase by phrase, in the act of committing it to memory, will be calling to his mind the ideas which the Psalm conveys. In this way he will get much more out of his drill than if he were merely learning, parrot-like, the sound of words.

29

Encouragement

Do not get discouraged. I know just how it is, for I have taught Sunday-school classes myself. I know what it is to go home Sunday noon with the feeling that nothing has taken place as expected, and that all your plans have gone awry. Nevertheless, in imparting religion, success and failure are not easily measured. You really never know when you do your best work. You may influence the lives of your pupils for good even when you think you have failed.

When that unlooked-for interruption caused by the illness of the organist occurred, followed by the further disturbance of the arrival of the new pupil, and this in turn gave place to the disappointment of Harry's forgetting his notebook, and when on top of all this you had to move your class to a new place because of the broken window-pane, you surely found yourself amid unusual difficulties. Then, you remember, the recitation not only went badly, but the story was practically spoiled by that irritating secretary who stumbled in upon you while the story was in full

flight and asked for the facts about the new pupil. All these things upset you and snapped the thread of your class's attention and interest. These events you are perfectly aware of without my telling you. But what you do not know is the rest of the story. Let me tell you what really happened. Your pupils, seeing your plight, instinctively watched your behavior. An unexpected little drama was going on before their eyes. Here stood a grown-up Christian on trial! They were very alert to see how she would take it; whether she would be a good sport; in what spirit she would weather the storm. Somehow you kept your poise and your optimism and managed to master, if not the prepared lesson, at least yourself and the situation. The net result was that the boys went home at the end of the hour with their respect for you intact, and, what is far more important, a higher regard for Christ's religion. They have not talked about it, but in the mind of each there runs a thought something like this: "That is the way a Christian grown-up behaves under stress."

In a very real sense you probably taught a good lesson that day. Remember that when these boys are middle-aged men and have forgotten most of the stories you have told them, the one thing that they will remember, if they remember anything, is you.

Put far off from us, O God, all worry and misgiving; that having done our best while it was day, we may when the night cometh commit ourselves, our tasks, and those we love, into thy keeping, and accept from thee the gift of sleep; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

YOUR PUPILS

YOUR PUPILS

30

How a Learner Learns

You are not likely to succeed as a teacher unless you know something about the process of learning as it actually takes place in the mind of a pupil. A law of nature, you know, is not a commandment to be obeyed or disobeyed, but simply a description of the way a force works and the unfailing way it is followed by the same effect. The law of gravity is an example. Similarly, the laws of psychology are descriptions of the same ways over and over again in which our minds and souls work under given conditions. Among the many laws of psychology there are two that apply to the process of learning facts or ideas. They answer the question, What does a human mind do when it learns a new fact?

The first of these tells us that the mind of the learner advances through the known to the unknown. It must start with an old fact in order to understand a new one. It goes from the familiar to the unfamiliar. What it knows today is the key with which it unlocks the door upon the hitherto unknown ideas of tomorrow.

Here, for instance, is a child of five who has not the faintest conception of the shape of the earth. The

earth's shape is a notion that his mind has not come to yet. He has not even stopped to wonder what shape the earth is.

Let us pretend that it is your duty to acquaint him with the fact that the earth is round. How will you go about it? You might catch his eye and say, "Look here, Tommy, the earth is somewhat spherical in shape." He would hear your words and possibly notice them enough to smile or even laugh; but the idea of the shape of the earth would remain quite as truly outside his mind as before.

What you would naturally do, even without knowing any psychology, would be to place in his hand an orange. He would look at it and turn it over and over, feeling its roundness and sensing its thickness and solidity. You would then say: "This earth that we are walking on is really a great big round thing like that orange."

I do not say that this experience would give the child an adequate notion of the earth's shape. He would need to have this first impression modified and enriched from year to year. But I do say that any idea whatever of the earth's shape which this child *could* lay hold of, he could get only by some such comparison as this.

Notice what took place. The idea of the shape of the orange was already present in his mind, and from this he proceeded to form an idea of the hitherto absolutely unknown shape of the earth. The psychologists do not say that this "proceeding from the known to the unknown" is the best way to learn. They have proved that it is the *only* way. Learning is a process of associating. Every new idea that we learn

we learn by connecting with some idea already in our minds. It is always a case of supplying a connecting link. If you could not connect a new fact with something already in your mind, that fact would remain an unknown hieroglyphic which you could not decipher. To know a thing thoroughly means that you have found ways to connect it securely with many other things in your mind. Hammering an idea in hard does not cause it to become well learned. Connecting it with many already well-known thoughts is what does the trick.

"Any new piece of knowledge offered to a learner must be met by old ideas closely related to it if it is to be understood and appreciated by the learner. The close connection between the old piece of knowledge and the new must be a connection which the learner feels. Some notion already within the learner's mind must grow so as to include the new idea. A learner's present stock of ideas is his only key to the meaning of new experiences."

This first simple law of learning has its roots very deep in human experience. There are almost countless applications in our daily life. I have not time to tell you all the ways in which this law operates. You will read about them when you study psychology. But let me give you just a few hints that bear particularly upon your work as a teacher.

Much of the secret of success in teaching lies in your ability to tell your pupils what this and that thing are *like*. Every good teacher is constantly saying that such and such a thing is like this and like that. As you see, the phrase "is like" stands between two terms; the term that comes before that

phrase is the new idea or fact which you are trying to teach and explain, and the term that comes after it is some already well-known idea. ("The earth—is like—an orange.") Skill in teaching consists in *selecting the right thing for the second term.* In teaching about the earth, an orange is a good second term to use provided that the child to whom you are speaking has seen and handled an orange. But a very common mistake in teaching is to select for the second term of the "equation" some object or idea which is as far removed from the learner's experience as the first term. (The classic example is the minister [1] who tells the children that Epiphany means manifestation.) It is surprising how often teachers do this. For instance, a child asks, "What is a parable?" and the teacher replies: "A parable is like an allegory; it is a kind of simile in the form of a narrative." This is all very true, but *allegory* and *simile* and *narrative* are no more part of the child's stock of knowledge than *parable.* The teacher has given an equivalent without doing any teaching.

This error is what I call the "Swamp Cogan habit." Guides in the woods of Maine love to talk about a legendary animal called the Swamp Cogan. When the tenderfoot innocently asks what a Swamp Cogan is, the guide replies in a matter-of-fact voice that it is the animal that lives on bog oranges. The next question, of course, is, "What is a bog orange?" To which the invariable answer comes, "It is what the Swamp Cogan lives on."

Most of the ideas with which we deal in Church-school work are spiritual and moral. This makes your work all the more interesting when you find it

[1] His name is legion.

necessary to explain some new thought, as the gap to be bridged between the known and the unknown is so wide. For instance, what will you use as the link of connection to explain God, the Holy Spirit, loyalty, worship, the Church, Baptism? In each case you must say to yourself: What idea is there already in the mind of this child which will make it possible for him to grasp the meaning of the idea that I want to explain to him today?

31

Learning versus Echoing

The province of this first law of learning is the learning of the *meaning* of a thing. Without proceeding from the known to the unknown it is quite possible for the learner's mind to memorize words and thus secure an appearance of learning. But this is not *learning* at all. Much so-called teaching has made the mistake of contenting itself with correct answers. But a child may give the right answer without learning. It is necessary for the learner's mind to advance from an old idea to a new idea if the new idea is to be understood and not merely echoed. Really to learn a thing is to see its point, to grasp its meaning.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who hast committed to thy holy Church the care and nurture of thy children; Enlighten with thy wisdom those who teach and those who learn, that rejoicing in the knowledge of thy truth, they may worship thee and serve thee from generation to generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

32

How a Learner Finishes the Learning Process

A second law of learning declares that the learner must go on immediately to *express* the new fact or idea, once he has gotten a good grip on it by connecting it with some old idea. You would naturally think that a person finished learning something first and then expressed it or not, as he saw fit. As a matter of fact, however, the expression of it (for the first two or three times) is part of the process of learning it. You have not finished learning a thing until you have given expression to it. The expression may be oral, or dramatic, or by writing, or modelling, or drawing, or in any one of a number of ways.

The primary reason for asking a pupil to recite is not in order that you may discover whether he has learned what you are trying to teach him, but in order that he may complete the process of learning it. (This law is recognized in the familiar statement that you never really know a subject until you teach it.) Having gotten the child to grasp the idea that the earth is shaped something like an orange, you must then give him an opportunity to tell someone about it. Otherwise the idea may fade and then disappear from his mind altogether. His expression of the idea completes his learning of it.

Another way of putting it is to say that you do not possess anything until you create it. What you give out, or express, or give birth to, is really your own. It becomes a part of you the instant you express it, but not before.

This second law of learning has reference to the

need of expressing the *meaning* of the newly acquired fact, and does not refer to the mere echoing of the formula which clothes the fact. You might say, "The earth is spherical." If the child echoing your words responds, "The earth is spherical," this is not an example of the second law of learning, because he has no meaning to express, "spherical" being an idea that has made no place for itself in his mind. One of the commonest mistakes in teaching is to be satisfied with such echo-answers. You avoid this mistake when you get the pupil to express the new fact *in his own words*. Persuade a pupil whenever he recites to pretend that he is teaching some other child, or explaining to his mother and father, what he has learned in school. This puts him in the right attitude to finish that particular piece of learning, and saves him from the wasteful juggle of merely trying to give his teacher the right answer.

Sand-tables are not used in geography or topography in order to provide the children with diversion or amusement, but to give them an outlet for the facts in topography or geography which you want them to finish learning. When they heap up the mountain ranges, scoop out the lakes, and draw the rivers with their fingers, they are in a sense actually *making* the facts which you want them to know. A child seldom forgets facts which he has expressed in this way. Psychologically, the reason that God knows the universe better than anyone else is because He made it. This is also the reason why He knows you and me better than anyone else does. Nobody can know a thing quite as well as the person who made it. Think for a moment of the objects which you have made: a dress, or a hat, a wooden box, or a toy ship, a scrap-

book, a garden. Does anybody else know these objects quite as intimately or quite as thoroughly as you do?

33

Expressional Activity

The phrase "expressional activity" is somewhat loosely used to describe two distinct phases of the educational process.

The first use, which is the more proper of the two, is to describe some action which the pupil engages in for the sake of fixing an idea in his mind. For instance, writing a composition; making an oral recitation; drawing a map; building the topography of a country in sand. In these cases the pupil does the outward act in order to clinch his hold of the inward idea. He does not write the composition as an exercise in writing, but in order to finish learning, for instance, the sequence of events in the Civil War. He does not make an oral recitation as an exercise in public speaking, but in order to strengthen his mind's grip upon the substance of what he recites. He does not draw maps in order to become an expert cartographer, nor does he work in sand in order to become an expert sand-table artist. The expressional work or outward act is only a means (usually physical) to an intellectual end.

The other use of the phrase "expressional activity," which is less correct, but which you will find in some books, is to describe what I have called "guided living." Just as a boy must go skating in order to learn to skate, so he must, for example, perform generous acts if he is going to learn to be generous. I have already mentioned instances where a class performs

in company certain acts of kindness in order to acquire the Christian habit and virtue of kindness. You learn to be generous by being generous. That which comes to birth within as an impulse—to mercy, fair play, or self-denial, for instance—must come out and find expression in a corresponding act of mercy or fair play or self-denial as the case may be. Otherwise the character-forming possibilities perish unrealized.

In the one case the end is the capturing of an idea that will help to build a strong mind, and in the other of a trait of character that will help to build a strong man. The two kinds of expressional activity have much in common. They both justify their demands for opportunities for self-expression. They are both, also, active. Nevertheless they are two distinct things, and if you are a careful student you will distinguish between them in order that you may induce your pupils to give them both wide scope throughout their mind- and character-forming years.

Grant unto me, Almighty God, that justice which builds on thee, the faith which works with thee, and the patience which abides thy long delays; through Jesus Christ our Lord.[1]

34

Movement

Variety and movement are essential—except to unconsciousness. Have you ever tried to concentrate your whole mind on a black dot on a white sheet of paper? It can be done only for a few seconds. After a short interval you must either look away or else you will fall into a kind of trance. You can look at a picture a good deal longer because it has various parts,

[1] H. S. Nash.

and represents ideas which you can think about. Even to a great picture, however, you can pay uninterrupted attention for only a comparatively few minutes. Five minutes' unbroken contemplation of a masterpiece you would probably find very long and tiring, though people who are experienced in the technique of line and color can sometimes keep it up longer. The quick fatigue is due to the fact that the black dot and the picture are both immobile. Attention demands movement and progress and development in the thing attended to. This is why you can give your undivided mind for hours to a novel, even a second-rate one, or a poor play.

Does the lesson as you conduct it on a Sunday move? Does it progress from point to point? Has it variety? Does it develop? Do your pupils and you build it up together step by step? Can you (and especially *they*) feel it grow?

Never forget that the human mind itself is in a state of constant movement. It is not static. It tingles and vibrates. It cannot stand still. It is therefore your business to provide a program for your pupils that will give their minds something to move around in and work on. William James summarized this point in memorable words when he said: "Let your pupil's mind wander from one aspect of the subject to another if you do not wish it to wander from the subject altogether."

35

Obstacles

There is another very important matter in which movement plays a part. The one object amidst mo-

tionless objects that moves attracts the observer's eye and mind. Advertising companies make use of this principle. Walk down a street among the shops and the one store window which has in it some advertisement that moves, like a swinging pendulum, will claim a disproportionate share of your attention. This is purely instinctive and practically irresistible.

If your pupils are so seated in your Sunday-school room that they can look up and see other classes, they are bound to give their attention to any person who may happen to be moving (perhaps someone writing on the blackboard), in fact, to any movement however quiet or innocent in itself. This is why it is important to have curtains between the classes. You may not be able to bring about all the necessary improvements in your school's equipment, but at least you can exercise influence enough to have your class space screened in and relieve your work of this handicap.

Be careful also not to have the class face a window. Staring into a bright light induces sleep. If anyone has to face a window let it be yourself. There are times when a teacher has to choose between having the pupils face a window and letting them face other classes. But usually this dilemma can be overcome either by the use of screens or by arranging the chairs in rows at right angles to both dangers.

36

Interests Beget Interests

There is no separate principle or rule-of-thumb for securing and maintaining attention. Attention is not

a separate problem. It is the problem of good teaching. You do not first learn how to teach and then learn how to secure attention. It is all the one thing. A well-prepared and well-conducted lesson holds the attention of the pupils. Inattention is a fruit of bad teaching.

By taking successive advantage again and again at short intervals of the operation of the psychological law that the learner's mind advances from the known to the unknown, what some people call "points of contact" can be maintained throughout the entire lesson-period.

I have already said that you ought to know practically everything about your pupils; but chiefly you need to know their interests and their needs. These are your starting-point. Your goal is the enlargement of their interests in such a way as to meet their needs. Take any pupil as you find him and you find him full of interests. (It is never necessary to supply a child with interests.) The teacher's work consists in developing interests considered vital by the pupil to meet his real spiritual needs.

The way to hold their attention captive to the lesson is to win it. It is literally a case of winning. Other objects will compete against you, and the mind instinctively gives attention to whatever appeals to it as the most engrossing thing in sight or hearing at each moment. The lesson for the day, the business in hand, has got to be the most interesting thing in sight and hearing during your forty minutes. If it is not, the pupils will certainly not give their attention to it, except possibly the kind that is called forced or voluntary attention, which is not the real thing.

What you want is the involuntary or spontaneous kind of attention, which is real.

As someone has put it, "The way to keep your pupils interested and therefore attentive and therefore orderly, is to develop their existing interests so as to make these interests include both the lesson-material and the conditions of good order."

You will find that a pupil will take a permanent interest in a lesson which he understands and has had a hand in making.

37

Diverters

You see that the problem of attention, apart from its being intrinsically a problem of providing good teaching, is often a case of removing obstacles. Some teachers unconsciously create obstacles to attention. For instance, in the matter of clothing. I have seen hats which were so interesting, on which such delicately balanced ornaments nodded and glittered with every movement of the head, that the fascinated children could hardly look at anything else. An excess of bangles or knickknacks produce the same effect, and so do overbright colors. The pupils sit in rapt attention—to the wrong thing. Do not appear too peculiar or too interesting in these respects, especially as you meet your pupils only once a week and they hardly have time to get used to little distractions which in themselves may be harmless.

O Lord of life, make our lives clear spaces where children may find happiness and law; through Jesus Christ our Lord.[1]

[1] H. S. Nash.

38

A Warning

Do not resort to commanding attention by clapping your hands, or ringing a bell, or by any such device, if you can possibly help it. The effect is only temporary. Moreover, it calls attention to the wrong thing: to some penalty, or to the general question of attention, or to yourself. What you want them to pay attention to is the lesson or the business in hand. If by commanding you fasten their attention to yourself, you still have the problem of transferring it from yourself to the lesson. The point of contact which you want to make is contact between their present interests and the main problem of the lesson. Scolding does not accomplish this, nor does bribing or urging or entertaining.

39

Habits

Another factor that has a big bearing is the formation in your pupils of the habit of being attentive to the lessons which you conduct. A class forms the habit of attention or of inattention to a given teacher in a given subject. Like all habits these grow with use. A class which during eight or ten weeks has formed the habit of paying attention will often give the same good attention, by a kind of momentum, even when the teacher for some reason or other has what might be called an "off-day." On the other hand, a class which has formed the habit of inattention will

probably not pay good attention on the day that the teacher suddenly conducts an exceptionally fine lesson. Curiously enough the same group of pupils can form the habit of attention with one teacher in one subject, and of inattention with another teacher in another subject. If you have an inattentive group on Sunday, the teacher of geography may find the same group very attentive on Monday, or *vice versa*. In all this the psychological laws of association and suggestion and habit play a strong part.

40

Languages

If your pupils are studying French, Latin, Greek, Spanish, German, or some other foreign language, give them a Bible in this language and let them follow the Scripture lessons as they are read in church. This will serve the double purpose of helping to keep their attention on the service and giving them excellent practice in reading the new language.

41

The Difficult One

What are you going to do with your least responsive pupil? Perhaps he is shy—or lazy—or indifferent—or dull. He does not appear to make a place for himself within the fellowship of the class. You fail really to reach and to enlist him.

Try to provide this pupil with some definite and interesting assignment. For instance, induce him to look up during the week some fact concerning which the other members of the class will not be informed,

so that next Sunday he may be the one to supply that information and thus come to feel that he has helped to construct the lesson. Possibly what that pupil needs most is to feel that he is needed.

> **O God, the unwearied courage and unconquerable strength of the saints; Glorify in us, we beseech thee, thine own power, that being conquerors through patience, we may of thy gracious gift attain unto holiness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

42

The Joy of Discovery

One secret of good teaching is the ability to let your pupils discover truth for themselves. This applies to any subject. A good teacher of elementary arithmetic gives a child some counters to play with and leaves him to make for himself the discovery that two and two make four. At the moment he makes the discovery and comes running to the teacher to tell her about it, the child really finishes learning that truth. He does more than learn it. It is tinged with an emotional and personal excitement which makes it part of his own unfolding life. Thus, he learns it really and thoroughly. He learns it creatively. It is almost as if he had *made* two and two equal four. His discovery is an experience, his very own. He loves that bit of knowledge because he discovered it himself.

Test this by your own experience and you will find that you always love what you discover. It is a human instinct. If you discover that a novel by an author not yet famous is exceptionally good you immediately

get your friends to read it. You take pains to see that they read it, and wait for their commendation with almost as much excitement and expectancy as if you had written the book yourself. Because you discovered it it is your book. Very much the same thing happens in the case of your other convictions. If you think something out and arrive at a conclusion by yourself, you grow extremely fond of that particular opinion. Anything that you feel is especially yours, that you have in some sense created, is always particularly dear.

This is one reason why people take so very emphatic a stand about a *second* opinion on a given question. When you hear someone say, "I used to think so and so, but now I am convinced that the opposite is the truth," you may be sure that he holds the second opinion more strongly than he did the first. He loves it because it is a discovery of his own. That is why people who change their allegiance from one denomination to another usually become more ardent supporters of the Church of their final choice than people who have grown up in that Church. To discover a Church is to love it with that peculiar passion which is mixed with personal pride in one's wisdom or acuteness. You will doubtless recall many other illustrations of this very human trait.

You must allow this instinct to have free play in your pupils. Do not thrust truth at them as if it were propaganda, but rather cover it up a little and only lead them near enough to it so that they may have the pleasure of lifting the veil themselves. Let them discover it in their own way. Let them even think that they are discovering it in spite of you. This will not hurt your feelings, for your business is to make

them think not how wonderful you are but how wonderful truth is. Your most triumphant moment must always be the moment when some pupil comes to you to tell you about a great discovery that he has made, and you realize that it is just the thing that you have wanted him to learn.

If you are wise you will never greet his declaration with "That is just what I hoped you would find," but will express your interest and joy in the truth itself, seeing it with the pupil's eyes as if for the first time, and sharing in the delight and surprise of his fresh discovery. The crowning glory of teaching is the ability to make a pupil feel that he is teaching you rather than that you are teaching him. When he is older he will look back and realize with what gentleness and skill you led him to truths which in his innocent and impetuous enthusiasm he thought he was discovering unaided. He will then, in his maturity, appreciate and praise you, at that safe distance whence praise will do you no harm. Very likely you yourself can recall some teacher of your youth who stood modestly by while you rushed headlong into a new mansion of truth through a door which she held silently open for you.

O God, who alone canst uphold the hearts of man, set us free from vanity and fear, to the end that thine everlasting Gospel may through us reach the world without hurt or hindrance; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.[1]

[1] H. S. Nash.

YOUR CLASS

YOUR CLASS

43

Success

Do you regard your class as successful?

To know whether anything is successful or not we must first know its aim. A successful enterprise is one which fulfills its aim. Someone has said that the aim of a Church-school class is to induce a group of pupils progressively to acquire and progressively to put into practice definite Christian knowledge and ideals. It has also been said that a class should aim at the intelligent solution of the present spiritual problems of its pupils. Or a Church school may be regarded as an agency which "applies definite ideas to the solution of definite problems of particular pupils in such a way as to promote their growth into Christian maturity." Again, we may say that your aim should be to effect the formation of Christian character in your pupils for the sake of extending the kingdom of God. These are all very academic and precise statements, but if you will think about them and will then try to answer fairly the question, "How are these boys different because they come to my class?" you may be able to get some idea as to how successful your teaching is.

The level of a Church school can never rise above

the quality of teaching which actually takes place in its classrooms week by week. We need to be reminded over and over again that a school's success is not measured by the efficiency of its administration, the excellence of its textbooks, the size of its enrollment, the heartiness of its singing, or any other standard of the sort. The real test of a Church school at any given moment is the quality of the teaching that goes on in it.

Do not be discouraged because you cannot put your finger on results that can be put down and added up. You may be perfectly certain that you can never measure accurately the success of your class. Only God really knows exactly how much you are doing for your pupils. Very likely some of the finest things you do for them you will never know. Spiritual growth takes place silently.

> **Grant, O God, we beseech thee, that in this our battle of life we may never faint nor be weary, but continuing steadfast in thy service may at length obtain the victory which thou hast promised to thy faithful servants; through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

44

Training to Serve

Every Church-school teacher worthy of the name is training young people to carry gladly their share of the load in social service. You are giving your pupils ideals which will make them better neighbors in whatever community they happen to live. You must give them also practice in living a neighborly life. The

place to begin is in the life of the class itself. This class is a social unit. It is a little group within the kingdom of God. You must set the tone of this group and see that it conducts itself in a way that could be called a model for all other groups, ranging in size from a family to a city or nation. In your class you will find yourself confronted with such problems as courtesy, mutual forbearance, generosity, helpfulness, and self-sacrifice. Each member will have to control his own private desires for the good of the whole class. The class as a unit will have to put itself out for the good of the whole school; the school for the parish; the parish for nation and Church and world.

Great as it may come to be finally, it all has its beginnings in this one little group of which you are the leader. By the way you conduct the class and by the way you teach the class to conduct its own affairs, you teach the Christian life in its social aspect. The political ideas of these boys, their notions about fair play, their public spirit, their sense of civic responsibility—these and other ideals will partly depend upon how they as a group conduct their group life under your guidance.

In all your work of this kind be sure that your teaching makes use of *real situations*. Do not manufacture situations or talk about imaginary ones. It is far better to take what really happens in the natural course of events and deal with it and interpret it so as to teach Christian social living.

O Master of men, set our hearts on fire with the desire to know thy blessed will, and send us forth amongst thy people to teach and to save; through Jesus Christ our Lord.[1]

[1] H. S. Nash.

45

A Society

You ought to regard your pupils not primarily as a class, but really as a club or organization. I do not make this distinction for the sake of the words, but because the words signify different things regarding the *purpose* of the group. The purpose of a class is usually considered to be the acquiring of information, whereas the purpose of a club or of an organization usually is to carry forward some cause. The latter idea ought to control your group of pupils. They are a small part of the Christian Church, banded together under your leadership for the purpose of promoting a certain cause and accomplishing certain results.

When you meet your pupils for the first time in the autumn I can imagine you saying to them something like this: "You and I are going to form a sort of club which will meet here once a week on Sundays and occasionally on other days, sometimes at the church and sometimes in other places. We have a very special piece of work that the Church has given us to do this year. A different task has been given to each class in our school. Our work is going to be to find out what kind of a life Jesus lived on this earth, and then to do practice-work as a group living that kind of a life. That is our work for the year, and that is the purpose of our existence as a group. We shall try to find out what this lot of thirteen-year-old boys can do for our parish, and for our town, and for the world at large, that will be the kind of thing that Jesus would do; and we are not only going to

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find out what it is but we are going to *do* it. Our aim is to make ourselves better servants of Christ."

46

Class Spirit

I have heard of a Sunday school in which a class of boys has kept a scrapbook for years, devoting a number of pages to each member. Among other things the book contains pictures of each boy at different ages, facts about their school and college careers, and other matters of mutual interest. Today, although they are men in business now, it is an invariable rule that each writes to all the others on their birthdays.

O God our Father, good beyond all that is good, fair beyond all that is fair, in whom is calmness and peace; Make up, we beseech thee, the dissensions which divide us from each other, and bring us back into that unity of love which is the likeness of thy sublime nature; that bound together in thy Spirit, we may know that peace of thine which maketh all things one; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

47

Money

Each of your pupils should give an offering which represents his own efforts, his own generosity. The money should be either saved or earned. Most children spend considerable money on themselves every week for candy, gum, movies, and other pleasures. They can earn money by shovelling snow, running errands, doing housework, etc. You must enlist their

interest in the particular cause for which the money is given. This is easily done because the cause, when presented through actual cases and true stories, is in itself interesting, even thrilling.

Your aim should be to train your boys in the Christian use of money; to teach them stewardship. You want them to recognize the giving of money as a part of the worship and service of God. As each penny or dime or quarter is offered, the giver should say a prayer, if only the three words, "Thy kingdom come."

48

Missionary-Mindedness

Try to keep the "missionary note" in evidence in your class. Do not teach missions as if it were a separate subject, but inculcate in your pupils the feeling that the Church to which they belong exists every year of its life for a missionary purpose. Put a map of the world shaded to show the Christian and non-Christian territory where they can look at it often. Keep them familiar with a few very general and striking statistics, in round numbers, showing what proportion of the human race knows about Christ. Let them understand that belonging to the Christian Church means that they belong to a spiritual army whose business it is to carry the light of Christ to all mankind, and to stamp out the powers of darkness represented by ignorance, or sin, or disease, or other forms of impotence. Our Lord said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." This ideal has not yet reached its fulfillment. The Christian army exists to carry to its completion the avowed purpose of its Leader.

This attitude of missionary-mindedness is one which ought to be taken for granted by you and your pupils, and everything that you and they plan or do ought to be looked upon as a contribution on your part to this central aim. Try to make it the controlling and dominating idea which shapes everything you undertake. You must be a missionary yourself, and must make them missionaries. In fact you must give the word a new meaning, for your pupils probably have picked up wrong ideas from references to it which they have heard in the past.

49

Prayer

One of the central duties of a Church-school teacher is to deepen and enlighten the devotional life of the pupils. This applies both to public worship and to private prayer. You must induce your pupils to cultivate the faculty of prayer, the ability to worship. Together with them you must provide the climate in which these can grow. It is your business to give them new powers.

I have said that the lesson must culminate in some special act of worship or service. A lesson that they finish learning by an act of worship enables the boys in your class to take part heartily and more intelligently in some regular service of the Church. Suppose you have a lesson on penitence, or the confession of sins. Your aim will be to teach these boys what they ought to do about their sorrow for the wrong things they have done; to make them feel the disloyalty to their best friend, Christ, involved in doing wrong; and to make them want to add their silent

personal confession to the prayers rising from the Church service as the beginning and impetus of a new start. These matters should be discussed in the classroom. Then arrange to meet the class by appointment on a certain day and go with them to a Church service, either the Holy Communion or some other service of worship. Part of the classroom work was an explanation of the nature of true confession. You explained the whole purpose and meaning of prayer in the work of bringing confession to a happy issue, showing its intention and significance not only for Christendom in general but for their individual, particular lives. In consequence, when you meet the class in church on that appointed day you and they have a special common purpose. During the moments of prayer you and they enter into that act more deeply, and with greater understanding, than usual. Then it is that your lesson on penitence reaches its culmination.

This is only an isolated example. The point is that all through the school year you are making yourself their leader,[1] taking them through a sequence of experiences in public worship, and shedding light on these experiences as you go.

In the matter of private prayer your task is even more important because more personal. Here your work approaches very nearly to that of a parent,[2] for you are the private tutor of each pupil. If prayer is one of the most real factors in your own life it will not be difficult for you to prepare the way for it to take a like precedence in the lives of these boys. Do not be content to give them printed prayers and suggest that they use them. They have their place of

[1] Letter 2. [2] Letter 7.

usefulness, but the important thing is to establish them in the practice of giving their help to one project after another through their prayers. Let it be obvious to them that your object is to secure their help. Suppose that your nearest relative or dearest friend is very ill; or that you are facing a most perplexing question and have got to come to a decision within a few days. Very well—you are a Christian. Nothing could be more natural, therefore, than for you to turn to your friends and ask them to bring into play on this personal problem the power of their prayers. Sometimes a teacher lays the matter before the whole class openly. At other times the teacher will prefer to ask one pupil only, or all the pupils individually. Sometimes this is done by a written note handed to them in a sealed envelope. There are ever so many ways when it comes to the details of procedure. Think these out for yourself. Use your ingenuity and your common sense. Use variety. Do not always do the same thing in the same way. Whatever your method, the point is that by taking prayer seriously and using it in the practical issues of life, you will implant both the theory and practice of prayer in their natures much better than you could by the best course of lectures in the world. Naturally the plan is meant to be reciprocal. Your pupils must be encouraged to ask you to help them with your prayers.

Both you and they have a prayer life. This prayer life grows and matures and deepens from year to year, not only in the case of the boys but also in your own case, for in this phase of life no one ever fully grows up. Remember that a teacher is a leader and a spiritual parent and a friend. In the prayer life of your pupils you must be all these things.

Find out whether the prayers they say at home are in keeping with their circumstances and age. It is a very serious mistake for a boy of twelve to use nothing but prayers for five-year-olds. It is almost as grotesque as for him to wear five-year-old clothes. It cramps and tires his spirit and prevents a healthy circulation of ideas through his soul. It may teach him to look upon religion as a childish and unworthy enterprise.

Be constantly on the lookout for them and pass on to your pupils ideas for improving their command over prayer. Some things you have discovered for yourself have helped you. Tell them about these. One person whose daily prayers seemed to be going stale pulled himself out of the rut by the simple expedient of taking a pencil and paper and writing to God instead of talking with Him orally. Just this little change of medium made all the difference suddenly between the lifeless and the vivid and real. The letter, of course, was torn up or burned each night. There was no attempt at literary style. Some find it helps them to pray out loud every other night and silently on the alternate nights. Some people have found that it brings their minds to a focus to use a different language for prayer, for instance French. Anyone who knows more than one language has at hand this ready means of escape from vagrancy and unreality. You will be able to think of other plans yourself. Plans may come and go provided prayer goes on without any lapses. The principal thing is that you should be thinking about these things and talking about them with your pupils. Prayer is a great and fascinating field in which you and your boys should be fellow-explorers.

Almighty God, who knowest how often we sin against thee with our lips; Consecrate our speech to thy service, and keep us often silent, that our hearts may speak to thee and listen for thy voice; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

50

Worship is Active

In learning under your guidance to worship (either in private or in public) be sure that the underlying spirit of your pupils in their devotions is one of cheer and confidence. Never let them associate with worship the ideas of dreariness or pathos or despair. Entrance into the presence of God is always an invigorating and positively joyful experience. If it is not, then the worshipper has been taught the wrong things both about God and about worship.

Be sure also that the pupils feel that in entering into worship they are entering upon an *activity*. Worship is not something that is done for you or to you. It is something that is done by you. Each of us has to do his own worshipping. Be sure, therefore, when you lead your pupils, that they realize that it is they who pray, they who sing, they who give thanks or praise. In other words, be sure that their worship is real to them. It will be their very own, and active, and enjoyed, provided that God is real to them.

51

Teaching How to Study

Part of a teacher's business is to see that his pupils learn how to study. Do not just tell them how and

let it go at that. Show them how. In the early part of the school year it will probably pay to take at least half, if not whole, lesson-periods for exercises with this aim. Gather your pupils around you and say, "Now I am going to pretend that I am one of you, and I am going to study and prepare a lesson." Then go through the actual process, step by step, leaving out nothing. Use every book and leaflet, paper or note-book, exactly as the pupil would do. When it comes to reading an assigned passage read it out loud. (This will be the only difference between what you do and what the pupil would do at home.) When it comes to writing, do the actual writing. In other words, give a perfect demonstration, and explain as you go the reasons for doing the different things and the best way of doing each. It may also be helpful to set one pupil the task of giving a similar demonstration in the presence of the class in the near future. You will modify this method in detail according to your own judgment and ingenuity. The point is that you must leave no doubt in your pupils' minds as to what you mean when you tell them to study at home.

52

Home Work

Take up the question of assigned home work with the parents of your pupils and come to a definite understanding. In view of the real importance of religion in the lives of the boys, and remembering also the amount of time available in an average week for their entire program of activities, decide upon a certain length for the home-study period—for instance, half an hour or an hour, according to circumstances.

Once determined, make it a public and not a private concern. Let it be known throughout the parish and let the minister have his share in holding the pupils up to it as the standard. It helps very much if the entire Church-school faculty and all the parents in the parish come to the one agreement. This is a matter not for one teacher to struggle with unaided, but for a whole congregation to decide upon after careful public consideration.

Make your assignment each week perfectly definite, and of such a nature that it can all be done and well done within the time-limit. You can then put all your weight into getting it done and done well. Do not assign too much, but have the boys exact of themselves every bit of what you assign.

53

Marking

A careful and simple marking system serves as a stimulus to good work on the part of pupil, teacher, and parent. It is possible to overdo marking and to let it wander off into intricacies of over-analysis. For example, a pupil should never be marked for attention or order. (If any one were to be marked for these it ought to be the teacher.) Do not give marks for the performance or non-performance of minor duties, such as bringing a lesson-book. On the other hand, in addition to recording the facts of attendance and punctuality it often seems wise to mark pupils for the quality of their work as students. In giving a pupil his rank or standing, take into consideration as many items as you choose, provided that you subject all your pupils to these same tests. Faithfulness and

earnest effort should of course be recognized as well as actual results. Note all good work with approval. It is a mistake to give prizes or bribes, such as watches or baseballs or even books, for doing the ordinary work that naturally falls to pupils in a school. But a form of recognition which has no monetary value may be helpful. One teacher, after reading the written work of the pupils, places her initials in a certain corner of the page if the quality of the work justifies it. This recognition is greatly coveted, and thus acts as a powerful incentive. Another method is for the school to take the notebooks which have reached a certain degree of excellence and have them stitched and bound in cloth-board, with the pupil's name, the name of the school, and the date stamped in gold on the outside.

O God, who hast taught us to trust in thee as our Father; Open our hearts to share the faith which thou hast revealed to us in thy Son, until the littleness of our knowledge becomes lost in the greatness of thy love; through the same, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

YOUR SCHOOL

YOUR SCHOOL

54

The School

What is a Church school and what is it for? The most complete and in some ways the best answer is this: A Church school instructs and trains children and youth to become mature Christians in action in the Church and in the community.[1] Every phrase of this statement has been carefully chosen and stands for a definite principle.

It must be a *Church* school, that is to say, run by the Church and paid for by it, and governed by Church ideals. If it is a Baptist Church school, it ought to bear the stamp of the Baptist communion; if it is a Congregational Church school, one ought to find in it the atmosphere and flavor of the Congregational Church. Every school ought to inculcate loyalty to the principles of its communion. And this should be done in the interest of good education. I am not thinking now of the importance of the various communions in themselves. What I am concerned with here is the simple psychological fact that religious education is better *as education* if it trains children in a wholesome Church loyalty. The two extremes of half-heartedness and bigotry are both to be avoided. What we want is enlightened loyalty. Loyalty is based upon affection. We begin with affection and

[1] G. A. Coe.

end with loyalty. This is a universal human experience, whether you are dealing with individuals or institutions.

It must be a *school.* It must be administered like a school, with proper responsibility all up and down the line from pupil to teacher, from teacher to supervisor, from supervisor to superintendent, from superintendent to minister. It must educate. To educate means to instruct and train. Instruction means imparting facts and ideas. That is a purely mental process. It consists of exercises in thought. Training means teaching people how to do things. A person needs to be trained to row a boat or to knit or to sing or to live a certain type of life. Any institution which confines its efforts to instruction and leaves out training thereby ceases to live up to its name as an educational institution. On the other hand any organization which merely trains without instructing thereby becomes equally non-educational. When you both instruct and train, then and then only do you educate.

Furthermore, to be a good school the teaching which takes place within its walls must be good teaching. A school is as good as the teaching that actually takes place in it, and no better. The character of the service rendered by a school can never rise above the level of excellence of the teaching that goes on in it. This is the paramount reason why your position as teacher is so important. You are one of the few most influential people in determining the value of your school. All this sounds very obvious, but you would be surprised if you knew how many superintendents and clergymen judge their Church schools by almost any standard under heaven except that of the quality of the

teaching done in them. A school is called in splendid condition because it is big, or because it is administered without friction, or because it sings well, or because it maintains a good record of attendance. All these are important, and indicate a tendency to excellence; but they do not touch the heart of the matter. If a school excels in all these points and the teachers mismanage or bungle their work, it is not a good school.

The important implication in the phrase *children and youth* is the fact that the school should take religious care of a child until he has graduated from High School presumably at the age of seventeen or eighteen. Post-graduate classes should be held for young people from eighteen to twenty-one, after which they proceed to the adult department where the unit of education is not the school but the class.

Mature Christians. This phrase describes the product of a Church school. We use the word "mature" of every person, no matter what his age, who can qualify as a full-fledged Christian *of his age.* A six-year-old child can be a full-fledged six-year-old Christian, entering with all his heart and mind into the modes of religious expression appropriate to his age. On the other hand, if his religious training has been neglected or omitted he may to all intents and purposes be not a Christian at all, but a little human animal with a stunted and undernourished spiritual life. There are all too many religious orphans in the Church—children whose parents have let them go spiritually unborn. Others are religious weaklings, their parents not having trained them for the "good works that God has prepared for them to walk in." Such children have by no means reached the Christian maturity perfectly feasible at their own age. You see then that in these

cases "mature" does not mean something reached at one fixed age, it means the normal spiritual stature for your own age whatever that age happens to be.

Of course the word *Christian* is so full of meaning that it would take a whole book to unfold it. It is enough for our present purpose to say simply that it means to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and be made like unto Him.

The phrase *in action* finds a place in our definition to remind us that a life of ideals, however high, which never get translated into active living, cannot be a truly Christian life. This point is discussed in the letter on "What is a Lesson?"[1]

The phrase *in the Church and in the community* indicates the double necessity that Christian social behavior shall include both the fellow members of our household of faith and also all men, women, and children of every name and condition and race. To be a good neighbor to fellow Churchmen only, is to be less than Christian.

The test of a Church school is found in this question, "What difference has this school made in these children?" It is similar to the test of the work of a teacher which is measured by the question, "In what respects are these boys or girls different because of their experiences as members of my class?" Of course, they would be different in some respects each year from what they were the year before anyway. They are growing up and therefore changing. The question is, What changes have been wrought in them by your school? What effect has it had upon them to belong to your class? In what directions has the experience made them grow? These are terrifying questions, as

[1] Letter 23.

we have seen previously.[1] It is quite possible for a Church school to do harm. It will certainly do something. It cannot possibly leave its pupils just as they were before. The experience of a child in a Church school ought to be the experience of "progressively acquiring and putting into practice Christian knowledge and ideals, and thus growing in the ability to live like Christ."

If you want to give yourself good intellectual and spiritual exercise, sit down some day and try to write out a clear statement of the aim of Christian religious education. Here are some attempts that have been made by various students in the past decade:

To form Christian character for the extension of the kingdom of God.

To enable a child to know his Father and to take his place in his Father's house, the Church. (Or kingdom.)

To cause Christ to live in all people.

> **Send out thy light and thy truth, O God, and lead me through the mists of ignorance, vanity, and fear, into the clear shining of the perfect day of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.[2]**

55

Guardian Angels

If you really undertake the spiritual guidance of your pupils along the lines suggested in the letters that I have already written, it may seem to you that six or eight boys are too many. When so much is

[1] Letters 16 and 43.
[2] H. S. Nash.

required of you, you may jump to the conclusion that one pupil would be enough to be responsible for.

But you must remember that in this work you are not alone. Theoretically there surrounds each child a group of grown-ups who have his spiritual growth at heart. I mean his mother and father, his favorite aunt or uncle, his pastor, and his Church-school teacher. I am aware that too often some of them do not take their responsibility as seriously as they should.

In any event the minister, the Church-school teacher, and one parent ought to have a conference at least once a year. It would take a good deal of time, especially for a minister, who might have to take part in two or three hundred conferences each year; but his time could hardly be better spent. We are so busy and our civilization is so complicated that we often fail to put the time in that we should on this kind of duty. Perhaps you can help to bring about meetings of this kind in regard to each of your pupils.

56

Sponsors

I wonder if you realize how very valuable godparents can be to your child. I know one family where the mother has taken pains to place in each child's room the pictures of his godparents. She talks about them to her children from time to time, and they exchange letters with them at least on their birthdays and at Christmas. The children are made to feel from the very start that they can turn to their godparents any time for help and advice quite as readily as to their parents. Thus it is made and kept a spiritual and friendly relationship.

At the service of Confirmation all the godparents of the candidates who can possibly do so should be present, being especially invited by the minister. In some parishes the godparents go forward and stand behind the class at the time of Confirmation, signifying the fact that they now lay down the responsibility which the children take on their own shoulders. I wonder if you are doing all you can to encourage the proper relationship between your pupils and their godparents.

O God, who makest cheerfulness the companion of strength; Grant us so to rejoice in the gift of thy power, that being freed from all fretfulness and despair we may glorify thee in word and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

YOUR CHURCH

YOUR CHURCH

57

A Teaching Church

The Christian Church is essentially a teaching Church. This is because the Christian's God is by character a teaching God. The most important thing about God is His character. Keep this in mind when you try to make Him more real to your pupils.

For a great many centuries men and women had a mistaken or inadequate idea of what God is like. They knew of His existence, but their ideas about His character were forbidding, and sometimes depressing. Ignorance about God and sin against God were making a dreadful world.

Finally God decided to teach His people what He was really like. He chose the method of the Incarnation, that is to say, He became a Man, with all that belonging to humanity implies—birth, growth, work, suffering, death. It is perfectly clear that He did this in order to teach. It was in the strictest sense a lesson. The method was that of absolute and perfect demonstration. In order to teach man how to live He came down and lived a human life. In order to show man what God is like He came and achieved a human character which perfectly reflected the character of God. The life of Jesus of Nazareth, meaning His entire life including thoughts, words, and deeds,

constitutes the greatest piece of teaching that ever took place in history. These are the ideas that lie behind the naming of Christ as the *Word* of God.

Therefore, the Church is a teaching Church, and practically everything that it does is done in the service of its teaching mission.

58

The Teaching Sacrament

The Lord's Supper is a teaching Sacrament. If you recall the events which led up to the final meeting between our Lord and His chosen disciples in the upper room, you will see that the institution of the Holy Communion was a climax in a career of teaching. Jesus had come to show men what God is truly like and to induce them as God's children to live the same life. During the years of His ministry He had exhausted language to execute this commission. By the use of every available means—sermon, parable, simile, exhortation—he had taxed the human vocabulary to its utmost. He now found Himself facing His special pupils in what one may call a last meeting of His class. There was absolutely nothing more that He could say to them in words. He had tried many, many forms of expression, and had found in them as in his larger audiences an almost unlimited capacity to misunderstand. Here was one last chance to teach His lesson in a way that could not fail to flash the light even into their darkened minds. And what did He do? He had recourse to a method which ever since the beginning of time has proved fruitful. He dramatized His message in a few simple acts. He took bread, and breaking it, said, "This is what I mean!

The broken life is what God calls you to live. Take the spirit of self-sacrifice into your lives and let it control you." Then He took wine and poured it, saying, "This is what I mean! The poured-out life given freely for others, as I am giving mine for you. Take this into your very souls and live it."

The disciples watched and listened. They ate and drank, and understood. And the power of that lesson is testified to by the fact that for nineteen centuries numberless disciples breaking bread together have repeated its teaching, in all languages and all lands.

59

Progress

I have already written of the need of motion or progress in the development of a lesson.[1] There is a deeper significance here, however, than you might at first suppose. You must try to make your pupils realize that the whole Church is in motion. It exists for progress. It moves forward under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When you join the Christian Church you become a member of a group which is not standing still but *going* somewhere.

The most ancient symbol of the Church is a ship. A ship must have a captain, and our captain is Christ. It must also have a compass and chart and anchor for safety. None of these, however, is of much use while the ship is tied up at the dock. A ship that remained fixed and immovable would be indistinguishable from a lighthouse or a pier. The purpose of a ship is to carry people to their destination. The wind needs to blow and fill the sails, and the ship bend to

[1] Letters 21 and 22.

the breeze, as it squares away on its course under the leadership of its captain.

Progress is essential to the Christian religion. We are on a quest, moving out of darkness into light, out of ignorance into knowledge, out of weakness into power. Our Lord said, "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."

60

Religion is Active

Anyone who is going to follow Christ must Think and Believe and Feel and Do. You see from this that Christ calls us to an active life.

We must Think. Since our minds come from God they are meant for use. We must consecrate our intelligence and keep it alert to do its part in the work for God's kingdom. It is not enough to have good impulses and intentions. We must also think out sound ways and means. We must be properly informed, not merely inspired.

We must Believe. Loyal Christians can differ when it comes to the details of the faith, but it is a mark of Christian character to *have convictions,* and to believe what we individually believe not only verbally but with our whole life. It is not a sign of intellectual superiority to believe little, any more than it is to believe much. In fact, a half-hearted or a small area of belief may indicate intellectual sloth, just as too large an area of belief (over-credulity) may indicate careless and indifferent acceptance. "It is as easy to be hoodwinked into believing too little as it is to be hoodwinked into believing too much."

We must Feel. Emotions form part of the best life.

Joy and appreciation and compassion and mercy find free expression in the life of any true disciple of Christ. Our religion ought not to appear to pupils as if it were a cold-blooded exercise, or an impersonal proposition. We must awaken their enthusiasm.

Finally, we must Do. I have already said a good deal in regard to this in other letters.[1]

If you will consider well, you will find that to fulfil any three of these without the fourth is to engage in something less than true religion. A person who believes wholesale and is full of emotion and busy as a bee all the time, without using his mind, will somehow be disappointed in the results. He fails to dedicate his whole personality to God. On the other hand, a person who feels things deeply and accomplishes a good deal within certain lines and thinks out many problems carefully, but yet never pays much of any attention to the matter of his religious beliefs, is living a hand-to-mouth existence, glaringly deficient in the element of permanence. Again, a person who is too cold-blooded to be thinking and believing and doing on the crest of a wave of deep feeling, knows no more of what is going on on the heights than any other dweller on the plain. Finally, as our Lord pointed out in His parable about the rock and the sand, there is little or no genuine substance to the person who thinks and feels and believes copiously, but does not do anything about it.

With these thoughts in mind, keep asking yourself whether the experience into which you are leading your pupils is really religion.

[1] Letters 3, 23, 33, 44, 45, 50.

YOUR READING

YOUR READING

61

Real Children

Read books about children. I do not mean psychological books on "The Child," but real stories about real children. For instance:

My Little Boy. *Carl Ewald.* Scribner.
Paul and Fiammetta. *L. Allen Harker.* Scribner.
Mary Lee. *Geoffrey Dennis.* Knopf.
Jeremy. *Hugh Walpole.* Doran.
Una Mary. *Una Hunt.* Scribner.

62

A Watchful Eye

Watch for appropriate articles and pictures. Cut them out, bind them between pasteboard covers, list them, and make a reference library of them. The National Geographic Magazine, for instance, often carries remarkably well-illustrated accounts of places where Christian missions are situated, and occasionally intimate descriptions of present-day living in the Holy Land. Pictures make splendid wall-decorations for your classroom.

Keep your eyes open. Gather in helps from all quarters. Exercise your ingenuity. Ask, in regard to whatever you see or hear: Can this be made to serve my pupils? Literature can be drawn on, art, the

theater, music, news, novels, museums, nature—there is no end! The world is your book if you have eyes to see and ears to hear, and a real teacher is known by her eyes and ears rather than by her tongue.

Are you a teacher?

63

Books

If you have read these letters and digested them you will be able now to study "religious pedagogy" or "educational psychology." There are many interesting books on these subjects. Let me introduce some of them to you.

You will find a great deal of information in

Childhood and Character. *H. Hartshorne.* Pilgrim Press.

Three other books in the same field are

Love and Law in Child Training. *Emilie Poulsson.* Bradley.

Guide Book to Childhood. *William B. Forbush.* Jacobs.

Child Study and Child Training. *William B. Forbush.* Scribner.

A book which has helped many teachers, parents, and ministers is

The Training of Children in Religion. *George Hodges.* Appleton.

A small pamphlet which may be difficult to buy, but which you will find in libraries, and which is well worth looking for, is

The Sunday-School Teacher. *George Hodges.* New York S. S. Com.

A textbook very widely read and studied in the past

decade, which contains a great many suggestions well worth knowing, is

PUPIL AND TEACHER. *Luther Weigle.* Pilgrim Press.

Another book by the same author is

TALKS TO SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHERS. *Luther Weigle.* Pilgrim Press.

Also,

HOW TO TEACH RELIGION. *George H. Betts.* Abingdon Press.

is a helpful study, well written and worth knowing.

In the field of *general* education there are two books bearing on the subject of teaching which are so fine that one would like to require every Church-school teacher to own them and read parts of them from time to time. These are

THE TEACHER. *George H. Palmer.* Houghton, Mifflin.

TALKS TO TEACHERS ON PSYCHOLOGY. *William James.* Henry Holt & Co.

And do not deny yourself the pleasure of reading

SHACKLED YOUTH. *Edward Yeomans.* Atlantic Monthly Press.

This is a collection of brilliant essays dealing with the qualities of spiritedness and imagination in teaching.

UNCONSCIOUS TUITION. *F. D. Huntington.* Flanagan.

is an extremely good treatment of the phases of teaching which cannot be reduced to rule.

The following books by Elizabeth Harrison will be useful:

WHEN CHILDREN ERR. Macmillan.

A STUDY OF CHILD NATURE. Macmillan.

When you decide to take a self-administered course in the subject of teaching-methods, reading perhaps two books every month, or let us say 100 pages a week, try this list:

How to Teach. *Strayer and Norsworthy.* Macmillan.

The Art of Teaching. *Joshua G. Fitch.* Abingdon Press.

Elements of Religious Pedagogy. *F. L. Pattee.* Methodist Book Concern.

Seven Laws of Teaching. *Gregory-Bagley-Layton.* Pilgrim Press.

The Point of Contact in Teaching. *Patterson Du-Bois.* Dodd, Mead.

Securing and Retaining Attention. *J. L. Hughes.* A. S. Barnes.

The Art of Securing Attention. *Joshua G. Fitch.* Abingdon Press.

The Art of Questioning. *H. H. Horne.* Pilgrim Press.

The Art of Questioning. *Joshua Fitch.* Flanagan.

How to Keep Order. *J. L. Hughes.* Flanagan.

The Use of Motives in Teaching Morals and Religion. *Thomas W. Galloway.* Pilgrim Press.

How to Study. *Frank M. McCurry.* Houghton, Mifflin Co.

How to Plan a Lesson. *Marianna C. Brown.* Revell.

The Method of the Recitation. *J. A. & F. M. McMurry.* Macmillan.

The Recitation. *George H. Betts.* Houghton, Mifflin.

Handwork in the Sunday-School. *Milton Littlefield.* New York S. S. Com.

When you wish to add further to your knowledge of both education and religious education in general, read

Changing Conceptions of Education. *Ellwood P. Cubberly.* Houghton, Mifflin.

Democracy and Education. *John Dewey.* Macmillan.

Education in Religion and Morals. *George Albert Coe.* Revell.

Education for Democracy. *Henry F. Cope.* Macmillan.

Organizing the Church School. *Henry Frederick Cope.* Doran.

Philosophy of Education. *H. H. Horne.* Macmillan.

Idealism in Education. *H. H. Horne.* Macmillan.

What is Education? *Ernest Carroll Moore.* Ginn.

A Social Theory of Religious Education. *George Albert Coe.* Scribner.

On the subject of worship and prayer this list will help:

Why Men Pray. *C. L. Slattery.* Macmillan.

How to Pray. *C. L. Slattery.* Macmillan.

Self-Training in Prayer. *Alan H. McNeile.* Longmans.

A Book of Prayers for Students. *The Student Christian Movement.* London.

Services of Worship for Boys. *H. W. Gibson.* Association Press.

A Daily Offering. *Alan H. McNeile.* Longmans.

Training the Devotional Life. *Weigle and Tweedy.* Pilgrim Press.

The Way of Worship. *Hetty Lee.* The National Society's Depository, London.

The Art of Public Worship. *Percy Dearmer.* Morehouse Publ. Co.

Everyman's History of the Prayer Book. *Percy Dearmer.* Morehouse Publ. Co.

The People's Book of Worship. *Suter and Addison.* Macmillan.

Teacher's Prayer Book. *Alfred Barry.* Thos. Nelson.

The Book of Common Prayer. *Samuel Hart.* The University Press of Sewanne.

For Biblical topics there are so many books that it is hard to select a few for mention. First let me refer you to a printed list:

SPECTACLES FOR BIBLE READERS. *Nash, Wood, & Clark.* Wright and Potter, Boston.

In addition here are just a few titles:

HOW TO KNOW THE BIBLE. *George Hodges.* Bobbs-Merrill.

HUMAN NATURE OF THE SAINTS. *George Hodges.* Macmillan.

THE SOURCE-BOOK FOR THE LIFE OF CHRIST. *H. Van Kirk.* Revell.

WHY I BELIEVE IN RELIGION. *Charles R. Brown.* Macmillan.

THE MANHOOD OF THE MASTER. *Harry Emerson Fosdick.* Association Press.

THE INNER LIFE. *Rufus M. Jones.* Macmillan.

JESUS CHRIST AND THE SPIRIT OF YOUTH. *Frank Ilsley Paradise.* Small, Maynard.

THE APOSTLES' CREED TODAY. *Edward S. Drown.* Macmillan.

THE CREATIVE CHRIST. *Edward S. Drown.* Macmillan.

JESUS OF NAZARETH. *George A. Barton.* Macmillan.

In your library also it would be good to include

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE FAMILY. *Henry F. Cope.* University of Chicago Press.

HYMNS YOU OUGHT TO KNOW. *Henry F. Cope.* Revell.

Every teacher wants to know more and more about stories—not only where they can be found, but how one's story-telling ability can be improved. To this end you will probably find help in some of the books here mentioned:

MANUAL OF STORIES. *William B. Forbush.* Jacobs.

The Use of Stories in Religious Education. *Margaret W. Eggleston.* Doran.

What Shall We Read to Our Children? *Clara Hunt.* Houghton, Mifflin.

How to Tell Stories to Children. *Sara C. Bryant.* Houghton, Mifflin.

In Story-Land. *Elizabeth Harrison.* Macmillan.

Story-Telling, Questioning, and Studying. *H. H. Horne.* Macmillan.

Telling Bible Stories. *Louise Seymour Houghton.* Scribner.

Offero, the Giant. *Elizabeth Harrison.* Macmillan.

Stories and Story-Telling. *E. P. St. John.* Pilgrim Press.

Pictures are closely associated with stories. Try reading:

Pictures and Picture Work. *W. L. Hervey.* Revell.

How to Show Pictures to Children. *Estelle Hurll.* Houghton, Mifflin.

64

Words

In many of these books you will find described, explained, and advocated much the same principles and methods which I have told you about in these letters. One difference will be that many writers of such books have a set of special words peculiar to themselves and to their topics. These words you will have to learn in order to be able to understand the books and to converse with their authors.

It is a very good plan, however, to learn the ideas first and then give them new names if necessary. Psychology is one of the very newest sciences, and so it has not yet driven its roots very deep into our life or settled down very comfortably into our language. Per-

haps it may truthfully be said that modern writers on psychology and education employ the most *conspicuous* language of all the students of our time. They are born vocabulists. Some of them could even be called "lexicontortionists."

"I am a profound believer," says a contemporary, "in the theory so well expounded by Lewis Carroll, who put into the mouth of Humpty-Dumpty a phrase of undying significance when he made him say that 'words should be made to mean what you want them to mean.' The only people I know who adhere strictly to this principle are the psychologists: that is why I love to hear a psychologist talk. Of course, I understand not a word he is saying, but it is a noble and an inspiring spectacle to see a mere human being crack a whip over an entire vocabulary and see the words jump up on their little red chairs like so many trained seals."[1]

A good deal that the psychologists have written is really a systematic and somewhat scientific presentation of ideas almost as old as the race. Psychology is a name for the patient observation of how the human mind conducts its activities, and the most orderly and connected account of the results of these observations.

Many ideas which for generations have been a part of ordinary household rule-of-thumb wisdom and common sense are now being dressed up in the precise language of science and we find it hard to recognize them as old acquaintances. Mothers and fathers have always been psychologists, that is to say observers and (as far as possible) influential formers of character.

When you read modern books on psychology, there-

[1] *Literature with a Large "L," and Fellow Travelers,* by MacGregor Jenkins. Houghton, Mifflin Co.

fore, do not be content to familiarize yourself with a lot of new words, but go beneath the surface and get at the meaning. Try to distinguish between old familiar ideas in a new dress on the one hand, and really new ideas based on sound inferences from them on the other.

65

"Infallibles" Old and New

Do not make the naïve blunder of supposing that science is infallible. Neither psychology nor any other branch of science is free from error. An infallible science is just as impossible as an infallible Bible. People are wonderfully credulous, and love to accept a thing (no matter what) wholesale. There is just as good ground for giving your allegiance to an "infallible" Bible as there is for an unconditional surrender to a so-called infallible science. The second is just as illogical as the first.

What we really mean by science is a method: impartial observation, comparison, and analysis; experimentation; careful tests; and so forth. There is no doubt that the scientific method is more conducive to an increase of knowledge than any other known human method; far superior, for instance, to magic. This is like saying that a modern rifle is superior to a bow and arrow. But to say that science can never go wrong would be like saying that you can never miss the mark with a rifle.

When people tell you that a certain fact has been "scientically proved" there are still many things that you ought to want to know about it. What science proved it? Who was the scientist? Was the man who did the proving a reliable scholar? What was

his aim? What were his prejudices and his general tendencies? Do other scientists, with other backgrounds, agree with him?

Even statistics are not infallible, for they are the fruit of man's labor. Supposing someone asked two students to gather the data and make a chart showing how the citizens of a certain town were divided according to the color of their hair. One of the two students might report 96 people with red hair and the other 99. The point is that one man would consider the hair of a certain individual red and the other would call the same hair brown or auburn. Behind every set of statistics there is the judgment of some person who had to decide in what column to enter each item. Statistics may be scientific, but they are not always invariable or accurate, because they are of human manufacture. A color-blind student would have a difficult time gathering statistics of the various colors of hair. Yet there are students today who undertake to do things almost equally foolish. What else is a scientist who tries to make an analysis of the religious and spiritual factors of human life who has never experienced religion himself? Freely admit that no one ought to turn to a religious book like the Bible for facts on geology, but acknowledge also that no one ought to turn to the methods and textbooks of the physical sciences for the facts and principles of religion.

66

Higher Criticism

You have asked me how you ought to deal with the difficult matter sometimes called "higher criticism."

Be absolutely frank. Whatever your attitude

toward the Bible happens to be, reveal it without subterfuge to your pupils. Take them into your confidence. You and they are to study the Word of God together, and it would be ridiculous to suppose that you could look at it from one point of view for yourself and from another in your work with them. If you believe that there are scientific inadequacies and errors in parts of the Bible you must explain the case to your pupils, but show them also how it is possible for you to maintain great reverence for this wonderful Book as a guide in religion while openly admitting that it cannot possibly contain the last word on scientific matters. Show them that the fact that you do not go to the Bible for light on geology does not render it any less valuable to you as a book on religion.[1] Or, we will say, you understand that there are many conflicting ideas about God in the Bible, and that the earlier ideas of His character are less complete and less satisfactory than the later. If this be your conviction about these points, or other similar matters, you must make them clear to your pupils. Remember that between you and them there exists a partnership. Nothing could be worse for them than for you to conceal or evade these points only to have knowledge of their existence forced upon them later in circles that are unfriendly to Christianity.

There are many fantastic and untrustworthy books about the Bible, and it would be a mistake to think that every book which is recent and which tries to be scholarly is on that account good. We must use our judgment in all things and select the best.

It is possible (and of course very harmful) to put into the minds of children an exaggerated attitude of

[1] Letter 4.

reverence and awe toward certain things in Scripture which the authors of those parts of the Bible would be the first to deplore. The Old Testament contains some stories retained partly for their human interest and partly for historical reasons not very closely associated with religion. Children ought to be allowed to enjoy these on the level at which they were originally written. We ought to smile with our children over the incongruities; we ought not to frown upon their recognition that the long bow has been drawn in the extravagant deeds of valor recorded in such tales as those about Samson. We ought to coach our children in a poetic appreciation of the story of the Garden of Eden, opening to them also its moral value, its great simplicity and beauty, finer beyond all comparison than any other equally ancient description of the beginning of things.

The point which I am trying to make clear is that in these high matters it will not do to have any secrets from your pupils. There must be no pretence and no shams. Nothing but the naked truth as you see it is good enough for the children of our God who Himself is Truth.

> "Since early times Christians have regarded the Bible as *inspired,* that is, written by men of religious insight under divine guidance; and as *revelation,* that is, the record wherein God shows Himself and His truth. For centuries inspiration was thought to have guaranteed the Bible from scientific, historical, and all other kinds of error, all fallibility of its human authors being divinely removed; while revelation was so conceived as to deny

all progress in the divine truth as revealed. The Bible was held to be a unit, literally and equally inspired from cover to cover.

"A century of study more intense, more adequately equipped, and more historically minded than Christendom had previously known has revolutionized the two ideas of inspiration and revelation. We now know that we can appreciate the full meaning of inspiration only by studying the historic forces, and the men of religious genius, that God guided to produce a Bible not literally inerrant but alive with religious insight. And we can understand the written revelation of God only when we view it as progressive, beginning with the record of simple and often barbaric beliefs and practices of the early Hebrews, and after over a thousand years of growth culminating in the New Testament's presentation of the Person and teachings of our Lord. So studied and understood, the Bible retains its unique place as the Sacred Book of our religion."[1]

[1] N. B. Nash, in *Spectacles for Bible Readers.* Wright and Potter, Boston.

O Christ my Master, these Gospels are a portrait of thee. I follow thee because thou art the truth. Then must I be truthful. Because I love thee so dearly, I must not tell the least, the whitest lie to thy glory. Thou needest not that I should lie. Thy cause doth not hang on my arm. I must not then by dogmatic stratagem seek to win thy fight unfairly. Here am I set as one little candle in the midst of many stronger than I. Thy cause is to be maintained by me in the face of doubters. But, unless I am sure that these others are not in thy confidence, why may it not be that thy cause is to be maintained in some measure by them against me? Since I know that my opinion of thee is profoundly unworthy of thee, I must expect to be tutored by thee still in a thousand unexpected ways. . . . . Thou needest not my pious frauds. But I need thy love. O help me, for thy dear sake, to keep myself from all manner of untruth and untruthfulness.[1]

O Lord of all love and light, let me tread the temple of truth with reverent feet. Let me not desecrate its sacred precincts with brawling and brow-beating, nor defile its altar with scorn for anything my brethren have believed.[1]

[1] H. S. Nash.

YOURSELF

67

You Are an Artist

You see then that teaching is an art. (It is not a science, but like all arts it uses science.) If you are a teacher, you must be an artist.

But "artists are born and not made."

So it is said; yet it is only a half truth. That is, it is true that artists are born. But they are made artists by dint of pains and toil and self-control and efforts most arduous. Artists not made? Ask any painter, sculptor, poet, singer, teacher. Such a fashioning and re-fashioning have they been through, such patient study, by such unconquerable will, as only they themselves know. The saying that artists are born and not made was not coined by an artist.

The beautiful picture, the perfect song, the liberated pupil—emerging from the hand of painter, composer, teacher—are made if ever anything was made. Created, formed, given birth. Born again! And through no accident of circumstance, but by the grace of an artist's untiring toil.

Remember, O Lord, what thou hast wrought in us, and not what we deserve; and, as thou hast called us to thy service, make us worthy of our calling; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

68

Non-Teachers

The exceptions you take to my last letter interest me. You have put the case well. It is true that there is another side to the story which my former letter did not touch upon. (Can every phase of any subject be covered in a single letter?) What I tried to say was that since a teacher is an artist he has to be made as well as born.

For an art is nothing apart from its exercise. It is activity whether it be the art of painting, of singing, or of teaching. You do not *have* an art, as you have eyes and ears; you have a skill that is both an endowment and an acquirement, and you *exercise* it. That is why you cannot be an artist without becoming one through practice. The painter becomes an artist by painting, and the more he paints the more of an artist he is likely to become. That is what I mean when I say that an artist is more "made" than "born." So much for that.

But, as you suggest, there is another side. Some people are so constituted that they are not likely ever to make a go of the art of teaching. For while there is room for improvement in every good teacher, however richly endowed with natural gifts, which can be realized through effort, yet, no amount of effort can make every person a good teacher. There are people whom no amount of pains will avail to make into painters, and others whom no amount of training apparently will turn into real teachers. Something in their psychology seems to rule out teaching as a possible achievement. They are and remain non-teachers, just as truly as glass is a non-conductor of electricity.

Perhaps we can sum up the whole matter by saying:

Hosts of people are born with the minimum gift needed to acquire the art of teaching.

All these people can become proficient in this art by practice.

Others are born with tendencies or characteristics which make it unlikely, if not impossible, for them to become proficient in the art of teaching even if they try.

There remains, however, one thing more to be said. Though teaching has many points in common with other arts, there is an important respect in which it differs from such arts as painting or music. I refer to the *comparative universality* of teaching as a human enterprise.

Practically everybody does a little teaching. Each of us is a center of influence. Practically all the influence we radiate is innocently pedagogical.

Then, too, there is something instinctively parental in all of us. Every man possesses all or most of the abilities and tendencies which belong to fatherhood, and every woman the corresponding graces and powers belonging to motherhood. Teaching is one of the abilities natural to both motherhood and fatherhood. Every parent has to do some teaching, and every adult is at least a potential parent.

Even this does not end the story, for a lot of teaching work creeps into our business and professional relationships. Really, there is an extraordinary amount of teaching done in business and perhaps an equal amount in most of the professions. You can see, therefore, that teaching does differ from the other arts. It is not true to say that practically everyone has to play the violin a little, or to paint pictures a

little; but it is true that practically everyone is teaching something incidentally to somebody all the time.

No matter what the walk of life, a man is almost always more efficient if he has some ability in teaching. I think it would surprise you if you were to test this statement by actual cases. Take, for instance, the work of a carpenter, a doctor, an insurance agent, an actor, a housekeeper, a landscape gardener, a storekeeper, a dressmaker, a politician, a lawyer. Now a good teacher must be a leader, a friend; intelligent, original, ingenious, sympathetic, far-sighted, adaptable, alert; able to like all types of people; humble, self-controlled, strong, versatile, and consecrated. Above all, a good teacher must be able to look at a situation from many points of view, to understand how things appear and sound and feel to the other person. Is it not plain that these qualities are the very ones in a carpenter, doctor, housekeeper, lawyer, or dressmaker that would induce you to choose them to do your work? In considering the cases of men and women who have failed in various business and professional careers, I have often been struck by the fact that what they really lacked were some of the more obvious qualities that distinguish good teaching.

69

Intangible

A good many of the factors which go to make success in teaching cannot be crystallized into rules or even principles. They are too intangible for that. Yet they are very important. For instance, every teacher creates a certain atmosphere. Your pupils will find you either likable or the reverse; either ha-

bitually cheerful or habitually gloomy; either positive or negative; either fussy or calm; either distracted or self-controlled. There are no rules for making atmosphere of the right kind except common sense and prayer and a good life. The reason why I mention it is to remind you of the fact that in your classroom work it is of the first importance.

Whatever happens you have simply got to be at your very best during those forty minutes on Sunday. Even if you have a headache or a worry or some other disability, you must rise above it for those few minutes. In the eyes of your pupils you are an almost official embodiment of Christ's religion, and you fail in everything if you fail to make goodness attractive.

I have just said there are no fixed rules, but here are a few hints for what you may find them worth: Never hurry. Never be nervous. Never scold. Never let it appear that you are making a great exertion. Never place a barrier between yourself and your class, but say "We" oftener than "You and I." Be approachable. Be habitually optimistic. Be agreeable. Of course you must have definite standards, and you will need plenty of backbone; but try to induce your group to make these standards their standards, and try to make any offense appear as an offense against the fellowship of the class rather than against you personally.

It is much easier to tell you what are the right things to do than to tell you how to achieve them. There are two extremes to be avoided. One is the rigid, antagonistic schoolmarm, irritable and sarcastic, hard and bitter, who has been portrayed in some of the novels of a generation ago; and the other is the futile and silly faddist, who has not so often been described

in books, but of whom a perfect picture can be found in a novel called "A Pocketful of Poses," by Anne C. Parrish.

70

A Loose Wrist

Be sure that your teaching-method is flexible. In a well-taught class the children do not sit stiffly in rows and all do precisely the same thing at the same moment. A lesson is not a military drill. You ought to do different things on different Sundays, and the various pupils should often be doing different things at the same time on the same Sunday. Each one ought to contribute actively toward the success of the lesson, and in that case the contribution of one pupil will be different from that of another. One will be artistic, another musical, another executive, and so on.

Be original. Think up schemes which no teacher has ever tried before. Remember that any method is good which brings about the desired result, which is that the religion of Jesus Christ shall flourish in the lives and characters of all your pupils.

In watching different teachers at work with their classes I am sometimes reminded of two types of horsemanship. The novice who drives a pair of horses sits rigidly in his place, grasps the reins stiffly, and holds the horses at a constant tension. At the slightest sign of wilfulness or caprice on their part he instantly draws the reins tighter. Nervous and suspicious, he creates nervousness and suspicion in his horses. The expert driver, on the other hand, sits at ease and holds the reins competently but lightly, allowing the horses plenty of free play. They move along gracefully and

with ease, for along the reins from the driver's hand runs the invisible current of perfect control.

Something like this is the way of a good teacher and her pupils. As teacher you control. But one of the indications of your competency is the fact that you allow your pupils a large freedom.

> **O my dear Master, give me a deeper love for the minds of those I teach. Keep me from forcing my opinions on them. Let me reverence them, and so teach them to reverence themselves.**[1]

71

Your Behavior

A man was once asked if he would make an address to a group of Church-school teachers on the subject of "behavior." He agreed to do so, but on the occasion, to the surprise of his audience, he spoke about the behavior of the teachers and officers.

The fact is that nearly all misbehavior on the part of pupils is due to misbehavior on the part of their teachers or officers. Needless to say, the misbehavior takes an entirely different form, consisting in carelessness and mismanagement, poorly-prepared lessons, nervousness, and aimlessness. Shortcomings of this kind on the part of the faculty breed corresponding disorder on the part of the pupils.

In the same way, the quality of worship on the part of the pupils depends largely upon the "behavior" in worship of the teachers. Some people when they are in church worship God with all their heart and mind and soul, not making an unseemly display (for that would rob the act of genuineness) but being actually

[1] H. S. Nash.

abstracted and lost in the business of the hour. A great student of religion has said, "People admire not that which you tell them is admirable, but that which they see you admire; they worship not what you tell them is worthy, but what they find you worshipping."

Any carelessness or half-heartedness on your part in the house of God will undo even the most eloquent and skilled verbal lesson on worship.

72

Strength

We have all had teachers, and we know the difference between weak and strong ones. Here for instance is a weak teacher. She is to teach drawing. The child sits at his desk with a pencil in his hand. Yonder is a vase of flowers which has been assigned to him to draw, but his first work was too poor to pass. After several of these failures, the weak teacher finally seizes the child's hand in her own, guides the pencil, and gets the picture drawn. The chief aim of the weak teacher is "to get the thing done."

Consider now the strong teacher. She makes the child believe that he can do better; she fairly supplies him with her own eyes so that he can distinguish between his false lines and his true ones; she encourages; she is patient. After a while, fired with a zeal that lifts all his powers to a new pitch of concentration, her pupil draws a creditable picture and does it himself. In other words, the strong teacher develops ability in her pupil. The teacher who keeps her hands off is the able teacher. Power is not the same as force. The dominating power of one will over another is one thing, the gracious influence of one personality over another

personality is a very different and superior thing. The very climax of power is self-restraint.

THE GOOD TEACHER[1]

The Lord is my teacher,
I shall not lose the way.

He leadeth me in the lowly path of learning,
He prepareth a lesson for me every day;
He bringeth me to the clear fountains of instruction,
Little by little he showeth me the beauty of truth.

The world is a great book that he hath written,
He turneth the leaves for me slowly;
They are all inscribed with images and letters,
He poureth light on the pictures and the words.

He taketh me by the hand to the hill-top of vision,
And my soul is glad when I perceive his meaning;
In the valley also he walketh beside me,
In the dark places he whispereth to my heart.

Even though my lesson be hard it is not hopeless,
For the Lord is patient with his slow scholar;
He will wait awhile for my weakness,
In the dark places he whispereth to my heart.

O God, give me thy patience, thy respect for the rights of the spirits whom thou hast created. No thought so clearly sheweth thy majesty to me as the thought of thy self-restraint, that thou in thine almightiness canst bide thy time so patiently, canst shelter the flickering fire of human love and intelligence, fan it so kindly, blow it so gently. Oh, thy goodness is past searching! I, I make a bellows of my little wisdom and blow so vigor-

[1] Henry van Dyke. Courtesy of Charles Scribner's Sons.

ously at the opinions of my pupils that I blow out the fire which I fain would make brighter. Make me more jealous of their rights. I am not set in my chair to thrust opinions into them, but to make them manly lovers of the truth. Should not a true warrior for God be glad when a younger warrior so mastereth the art of fence as to hold and more than hold his own against himself? Let my prayer be, "May these men come to all I am and overcome it." Take the film from mine eyes, that I may see the empty spaces filled with the hosts of God. Then shall I be gentle, and then shall I be strong.[1]

73

Teachableness

Perhaps the most fatal weakness of a teacher is "cocksureness." Anyone who feels that he knows all about teaching, that he can handle his class effectively week after week without much preparation, or that he has finished his teacher-training and has nothing more to learn, is on the decline if not already ruined as a teacher. Teacher-training, if by this we mean learning how to teach better, is a process which must never end. And with the best teachers it never does end. As I have gone about among teachers of all sorts and of varying abilities I have been impressed over and over again by the humility, the thirst for knowledge, exhibited by the ones who possess outstanding ability. It is only the ineffective and unimaginative teachers who are contented with their present methods and powers. Those who with a touch of genius produce remarkable results in the

[1] H. S. Nash.

lives of their pupils are always on the alert for better things, inquisitive about new ideas and methods, ready to learn patiently anything new that holds out a promise of improving their work. In other words, the best teacher is always the best learner.

Give us, O God, the scholar's conscience, that we may never, seeking for effect, go outside our knowledge; and crown thy gifts with the prophet's passion for righteousness and truth; through our Teacher and our Guide, Jesus Christ.[1]

74

Humility

Humility is one of the distinguishing marks of a real teacher. What after all is humility? It is a kind of wisdom. It consists in knowing the hiding-place of power. A humble person is one who seeks power not in himself but in the Source of all power, which is God. There are various reservoirs of power, situated on different levels. For instance there is the golden reservoir of money, which holds considerable power. There is the reservoir of popularity or human friendship, on a higher level. There is the reservoir of one's own private energy, and others which you can enumerate if you examine your own experience. One can draw on any or all of these, and there are times when one should. But the really humble and truly religious person draws ultimately on the highest and greatest, who is God, and whose power feeds and sustains all lesser reservoirs of strength.

As a teacher it is your special privilege to let the power of God flow through your life into the lives of

[1] H. S. Nash.

your pupils. This you cannot do unless you yourself are in direct contact with Him; unless you draw on Him as your chief Fountain of strength. To do this you must have humility; and if you have humility, there is at least the possibility that you may become a teacher.

> **O God, keep me from grieving that Holy Spirit who would fain guide me into all truth, by any stubbornness of ignorance, by any pride of opinion, or by any prejudice in favor of my own conceits. Give me, O my Teacher, the lowliness and loftiness of mind becoming those who are thinking thy thoughts after thee.[1]**

75

Show Christ

The central duty of a teacher of the Christian religion is to show Christ.

First, this means to show Jesus, the Man of Galilee, as He really was. Try to stand out of the way so that His vivid life will strike your pupils with something of the surprising force and freshness with which it first electrified the folk of Galilee.[2] Do not be eager to discuss theories about the Lord Jesus, but *show* Him. If only you can do this, His majestic figure will do its own work in the lives of your pupils without further assistance from you. We teachers are too apt to stand between our Lord and His children. Never let it be possible for the boys in your class to say that they would have seen Jesus more clearly if you had not been so much in the way. Let it be your constant aim to put Jesus of Nazareth forward into the light where your pupils may see His face clearly and catch

[1] H. S. Nash.
[2] Letter 17.

the clear outlines of His character. In order to do this you will have to spend hours in His company every week. Read all four Gospels repeatedly, and reflect upon the life and character there portrayed.

In the second place, you must show them the living Christ. Only in the degree that you can truthfully say with St. Paul, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" can you be to them for Christ what Christ is to all of us for God.

O Master of life and God of my salvation, fasten my attention on the things that are high and eternal. Keep me from the profanity of wandering thoughts, and the frivolity of surface thinking. Help me to live with Jesus and to think with Jesus, so that my message may be a word from him to men, winged with power to reveal and to bless; to thy honour and praise, and to the help of my fellow-men.[1]

THE TEACHER[2]

Lord, who am I to teach the way
To little children day by day,
So prone myself to go astray?

I teach them knowledge, but I know
How faint they flicker and how low
The candles of my knowledge glow.

I teach them love for all mankind
And all God's creatures, but I find
My love comes lagging far behind.

Lord, if their guide I still must be,
Oh let the little children see
The teacher leaning hard on Thee.

[1] H. S. Nash. [2] Leslie Pickney Hill.

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